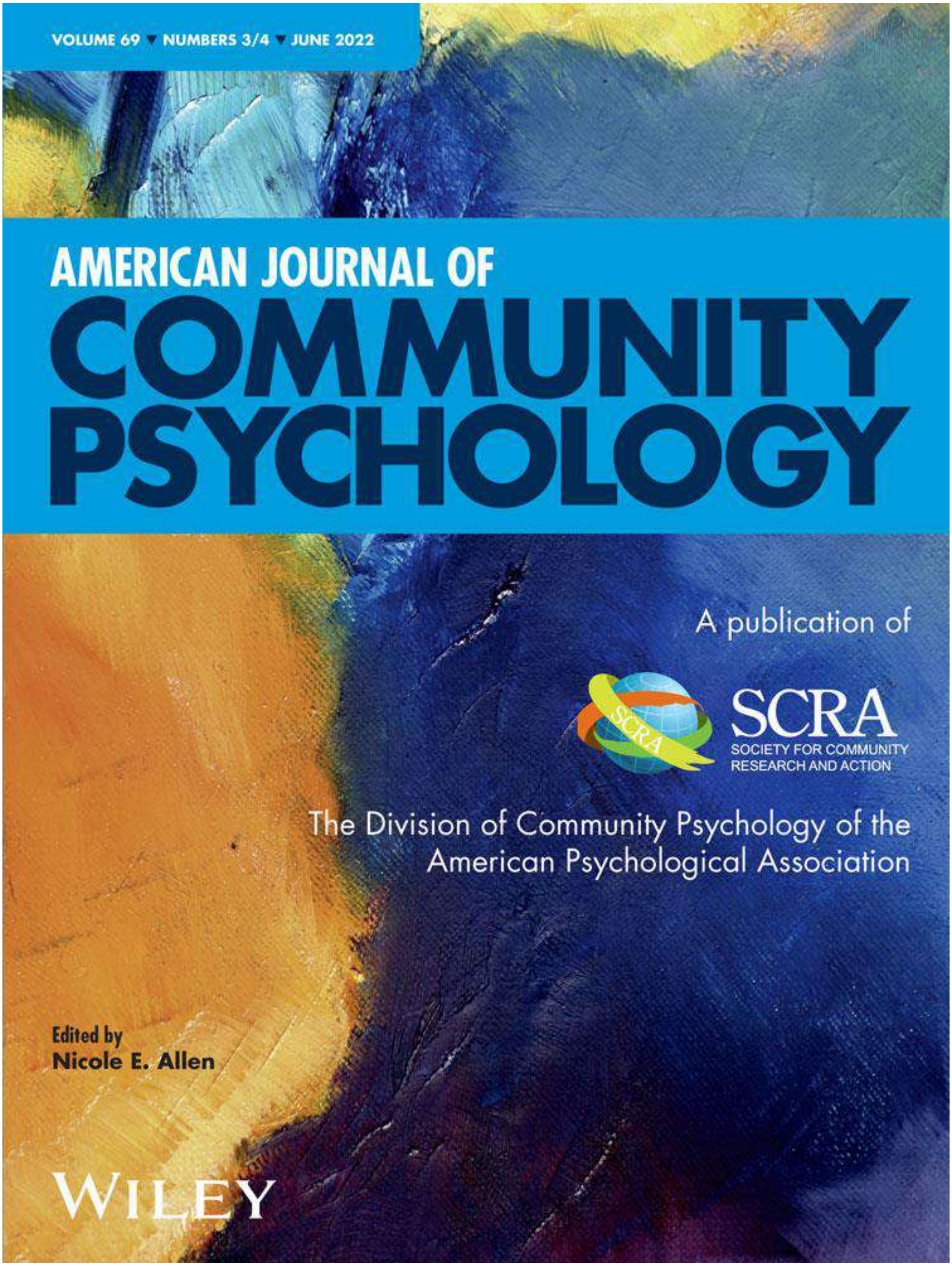

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Volume 69, Issue 3-4

Pages: **255-504**
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Issue Information

Pages: 255-256 | First Published: 16 June 2022

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Re-imagining mental health services for American Indian communities: Centering Indigenous perspectives

Joseph P. Gone

Pages: 257-268 | First Published: 01 March 2022

> **Highlights**
>
> American Indian communities suffer from inequities in addiction, trauma, and suicide.
>
> These inequities originated in histories of colonization and represent postcolonial pathologies.

> Mental health services depend on assumptions that may not fit those of Indigenous communities.
>
> American Indian communities would benefit from unprecedented innovations in helping services.
>
> Innovations in helping services may depend on Indigenous cultural and spiritual traditions.

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Fostering and sustaining transnational solidarities for transformative social change: Advancing community psychology research and action

Christopher C. Sonn, Rachael Fox, Samuel Keast, Mohi Rua

Pages: 269-282 | First Published: 16 June 2022

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Indigenous community psychologies, decolonization, and radical imagination within ecologies of knowledges

Nuria Ciofalo, Patricia Dudgeon, Linda W. Nikora

Pages: 283-293 | First Published: 11 January 2022

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Organizing a transnational solidarity for social change through participatory practices: The case of People Powered–Global Hub for Participatory Democracy

Carolin Hagelskamp, Celina Su, Karla Valverde Viesca, Tarson Núñez

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> **Highlights**
>
> Third places (public settings that foster sociability) may support young people who experience marginalization.
>
> Social capital and psychological sense of community may thrive in third place settings.
>
> Social policing (via informal social control) may inhibit young people from feeling welcome and safe.
>
> Future model development should empirically test if third place settings support adaptive responding.

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Disability organizations as empowering settings: Challenging stigmatization, promoting emancipation

Monica E. Madyaningrum, Christopher C. Sonn, Adrian T. Fisher

Pages: 474-483 | First Published: 11 October 2021

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Perceived monoracism and psychological adjustment of multiracial adults: The roles of racially diverse contexts and creating third space

Abigail K. Gabriel, Hyung Chol Yoo, Kelly F. Jackson, Rudy P. Guevarra Jr.

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Erratum

Pages: 503 | First Published: 08 July 2021

This article corrects the following:

A Positive Youth Development Approach to Improving Mental Health Outcomes for Maltreated Children in Foster Care: Replication and Extension of an RCT of the Fostering Healthy Futures Program

Heather N. Taussig, Lindsey M. Weiler, Edward F. Garrido, Tara Rhodes, Ashley Boat, Melody Fadell

Volume 64, Issue 3-4, American Journal of Community Psychology | pages: 405-417 |
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Pages: 504 | First Published: 28 December 2021

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Joy Agner, John P. Barile, Adriana Botero, Tiffany Cha, Nikolas Herrera, Tyra M. Kaukau, Lisa Nakamura, Megan Inada,

Volume 66, Issue 3-4, American Journal of Community Psychology | pages: 290-301 |
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DOI: 10.1002/ajcp.12560

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Disability organizations as empowering settings: Challenging stigmatization, promoting emancipation

Monica E. Madyaningrum[1] | **Christopher C. Sonn**[2] | **Adrian T. Fisher**[2]

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Abstract

This study investigated how a local disability organization in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, has functioned as an empowering setting for its members. This article discusses, in particular, the context specific features that have enabled members of this organization to resist the pervasive stigmatization commonly imposed upon people with disabilities. The research data was collected through interviews with 18 members of the organization and analyzed using the method of constructivist grounded theory. The findings suggest that this organization exists as an empowering setting because it functions as a mindset changer, an alternative resource center, and fosters supportive and courageous allies. Through this empowerment, members can challenge the normalized stigmatization and promote more emancipatory identities, particularly in a rural context where some socio-cultural aspects may further complicate the disadvantages of people with disabilities. Implications for future research and disability interventions are discussed.

KEYWORDS

Disability, Disability organizations, Empowering settings

Highlights

- The current study explores a model of empowerment, which is grounded and produced in Asian context.
- We expand community psychology theorization of empowerment.
- The current study illustrates the intersection between community psychology and disability studies.

INTRODUCTION

Drawing on the literature of empowering settings (e.g., Aber et al., 2011; Maton, 2008; Maton & Salem, 1995; Neal, 2014), this study examined the mediating processes through which a local disability organization in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, empowers its members. This article sought to contribute to the literature by explicating the context specific features that have enabled members of this organization to resist the pervasive stigmatization commonly imposed upon people with disabilities. With this in mind, this study aimed to address the concerns that highlight the relatively sparse research and action reports in community psychology that are responsive to the struggles of people with disabilities (Balcazar & Suarez-Balcazar, 2017; Goodley & Lawthom, 2005; McDonald et al., 2017).

Exploring contextual features of empowering settings

Underpinned by an ecological perspective on human functioning, community psychology is interested in investigating the roles of settings in promoting both personal and collective empowerment (e.g., Rappaport, 1995; Sarason, 1972; Trickett, 2009; Zimmerman, 2000). This interest is reflected in the notion of empowering community settings (ECS), which are defined as social spaces with enabling characteristics and processes that, over time, may lead to empowering outcomes (Maton, 2008).

Studies on ECS have explicated mediating variables and processes that characterize empowering settings (e.g., Maton, 2008; Maton & Salem, 1995; Peterson & Speer, 2000; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000).

Specifically, Maton and Brodsky (2011) suggest three key enabling mediators through which ECS generally facilitate member empowerment. The first component is cognitive/affective mediators that suggest how settings facilitate fundamental alterations in awareness, motivation, and self-efficacy of their members by fostering critical consciousness. The second mediator is the instrumental components, which point to the function of settings in promoting capacity building and meaningful roles. The third component is the relational mediators, which explain how settings foster member empowerment by encouraging supportive and inclusive social relations. It is through the combination of these three enabling mediators that ECS typically enact their transformative roles. Informed by this literature, this study defined ECS as settings that have transformative functions and mechanisms through which members can experience empowering outcomes in relation to their collective struggle for more just living conditions.

Studies on ECS have reported the relevance of these mediators in various types of settings (e.g., Case & Hunter, 2012; Dutt, 2018; Menon & Allen, 2020; Salusky et al., 2020; Todd, 2012; Zeldin et al., 2018). However, these mediators generally manifest differently in each setting. Therefore, more studies are needed to explore context-specific features of empowering settings in different cultural contexts (Christens & Speer, 2011; Maton & Salem, 1995; Speer & Hughey, 1995; Wilke & Speer, 2011).

Living with disabilities in a rural javanese context

Adioetomo et al. (2014) reported that Indonesia has 25 million people with disabilities (henceforth, PWD), or 10%–15% of the population. Most of them live with multidimensional disadvantages, these include low economic status, poor health condition, lack of education, and social exclusion (Adioetomo et al., 2014). In the rural Javanese context, the context of this study, there are certain socio-cultural aspects that may further complicate these disadvantages, including the emphasis on religious and communal life.

Religion has always been an important political and cultural referent in Indonesian society (Seo, 2013). At present, the majority of native Javanese in Yogyakarta have adopted Islam as their religion with a minority of the population following Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism (BPS-Statistics of D.I. Yogyakarta Province, 2021). In addition to these principal religions, the Javanese people's religious orientations are also underpinned by Javanese mysticism, popularly known as *Kejawen*. Despite following different religions, people appear to share similar worldviews and ethical frameworks because of the influence of *Kejawen* teachings (Koentjaraningrat, 1985).

One particular feature illustrating the intersection between people's formal religions and *Kejawen* teachings is the belief in the Supreme Being, which is commonly accepted as a core approach to life. This belief manifests in the understanding that each individual is ascribed to certain roles or fate; therefore, people are oriented toward deterministic views of life (Magnis-Suseno, 1997). Influenced by a deterministic worldview, people typically perceive disabilities as bad personal fate associated with notions like karma, the wrath of God, a divine test or punishment. Consequently, PWD often struggle with feelings of shame and a sense of inferiority (Thohari, 2013).

Maintaining social harmony and emphasizing people's social obligations for providing mutual assistance are also key features of Javanese tradition. These values are translated into various socio-cultural routines that expect people to actively participate, either by providing material support or volunteering in the activities. A failure to do so may result in social sanctions in the form of being socially isolated, stigmatized as a socially ill person, or having access to the social resources available in the community restricted (Guinness, 2009; Newberry, 2007).

Within the broader Indonesian political context, the emphasis on social obligations also represents people's collective strategy to deal with the lack of adequate public services (Guinness, 2009; Newberry, 2007). As poor public services are still common, people often have to rely on their own resources and efforts to meet their basic needs, such as needs for health and education. In these conditions, mutual assistance is an important social resource and insurance. For example, during fieldwork for this study we found that borrowing a neighbor's car had become the response to the absence of a reliable ambulance service. Likewise, participating in a village rotating credit group was a helpful resource for low-income families to counteract the unreliable social benefits provided by the government. This situation suggests there are cultural and economic pressures that encourage people to maintain their involvement in the network of communal exchanges operationalised through various social routines (Guinness, 2009; Koentjaraningrat, 1985; Newberry, 2007).

For PWD, this socio-cultural context poses both protective and risk factors. For example, during our fieldwork, we found that familial connections could create access to employment for PWD, which otherwise might not be available due to the discriminatory employment environment in Indonesia. However, we also observed that the socio-cultural context could put more stress on the social isolation of PWD and reinforce the patronizing views of PWD as community burdens.

The portrayal of PWD as inferior individuals is circulated through various labels in the wider context of Indonesian society (Adioetomo et al., 2014). Despite the ongoing campaign for the use of the terms *disabilitas* or *difabel* (the Indonesian versions of disability and disabled), the use of degrading terms, such as *cacat* and *tuna* (crippled and defect), remain common. As a result, the pervasive stigmatization of PWD as inferior individuals and inattention to their existence and voices has been normalized (Suharto et al., 2016).

Progressive disability organizations that seek to change these realities started to emerge in the early 2000s. Through activities ranging from organizing street demonstrations to advocating the reformation of disability acts, these organizations have gradually raised public awareness of the political nature of disabilities (Dibley & Tsaputra, 2019).

This context orientated this study toward the social model of disability, which emphasizes the socio-political and cultural embeddedness of disabilities (Goodley, 2011; Kagan et al., 2006; Oliver, 2009). Drawing on this model, we explored how a local disability organization in Indonesia functions as an empowering setting and enables its members to challenge the oppression of PWD. We also sought to determine the context-specific features that characterize this organization as a transformative site.

METHOD

Setting

The site of this study—hereafter the Indonesian Disability Network (IDN)—is one of the new emerging progressive disability organizations initiated and led by PWD. The IDN is located in Yogyakarta province, Indonesia; an area that was hit by a massive earthquake in 2006 and resulted in thousands of deaths and injuries (Zaumseil et al., 2014). The postdisaster context of this earthquake instigated the development of the IDN, which was established in 2009. The majority of its members are individuals who acquired disabilities because of the earthquake.

In 2013, the IDN became prominent for its initiation of an assistive device service center. It was the first and only organization providing such a service in the area. PWD responded positively to the initiative partly because buying new assistive devices was often hindered by low financial capacity and health insurance provided by the government did not cover assistive devices. This service center also created job opportunities for some members, who were previously unemployed or did not have steady income, by hiring them as the mechanics.

In addition, the workshop provided a space for the IDN to hold regular monthly meetings that involved all members. The meetings were usually used for conducting internal monitoring of the organization (e.g., presenting financial reports), discussing upcoming external events which were relevant to members (e.g., public actions related to disability), and having occasional training sessions. The training sessions introduced practical skills, which aimed to address members' shared needs and concerns. Furthermore, the workshop also became a vibrant gathering place, as there were always members who stopped by to have a chat. It is through these activities that the IDN fostered progressive views on disability, nurtured supportive social interactions, and became an instrumental information hub for its members.

Participants

When this study was undertaken, the IDN had about 25 active members. The majority of them had physical disabilities and few members were nondisabled. Their education level ranged from not finishing elementary school to graduating from high school (grade XII). Fewer than five members went to university. Most members did not have a steady occupation and were self-employed in home-based microbusinesses (e.g., traditional food seller, tailor, farmer). All active members were approached to take part in this study and 18 members consented to participate. The participants included six females and 12 males, ranging in age from their early twenties to their early fifties, and the majority of these participants had been involved in the IDN for more than five years.

Research design

The transformative paradigm in disability research that advocates for emancipatory disability studies informed this study. Methodological implications of this orientation include emphasis on the importance of nurturing equal relationship between researchers and participants (Mertens et al., 2011). Therefore, we opted for research methods that accentuated the perspectives of individuals with lived experiences. In doing so, we followed the methods of constructivist grounded theory (CGT) as it provides guidelines for collecting and analyzing data in inductive ways and this approach is instrumental for exploring interpretative meanings of a social process (Charmaz, 2006, 2007).

Data collection

After receiving ethics approval from the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, the first author (an insider in the cultural context of the study) commenced fieldwork at the end of October 2014. Fieldwork preparation also included regular consultations with relevant resource people and organizations in the study site, to ensure the appropriateness of the fieldwork activities to the local context and its cultural protocol.

Data was collected using semistructured interviews. The first author, a native speaker of *Bahasa* Indonesia and Javanese (the local language used in the area), conducted the interviews. The interview included a series of questions which focused on exploring the meaning and significance of this organization to the participants (e.g., *How did you become involved in the IDN? What do you value most from your involvement in this organization?*). Data collection included on-site observation in the organization and participation in daily activities five days a week over five months by the first author.

Interview durations ranged from 30 minutes to one hour. Most of the interviews were conducted at participants' residences at their requests but some took place at the IDN office (i.e., in a room or in the front yard—a space that allowed the interviewer and interviewee to be separated from other people who were at the office). Some participants were interviewed more than once to gain deeper understandings of the information provided. With the participants' permission, the interviews were digitally recorded. A professional service, which ensured data confidentiality, conducted the transcriptions, resulting in 284 pages of single-spaced transcript. The first author read and reread each transcription while listening to the audio record to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions.

Data analysis

Informed by CGT, the data analysis involved the process of transforming data into theoretical concepts (Mills et al., 2006). Data analysis followed three stages: the process of coding, developing conceptual categories, and creating a theoretical map. Coding involved line-by-line close reading and rereading of each interview transcription. At this stage, the analyst created descriptive labels to capture meanings evident in the participants' responses in each selected part of the data. Codes were written in Indonesian language and often in the form of in vivo labels so that sensitivity toward nuances of the conversations could be maintained and the likelihood of imposing preconceived ideas was lessened. In the next phase of the coding process, all the descriptive codes were transformed into more analytical labels. The analyst moved across all interviews repeatedly comparing descriptive codes and identifying patterns or recurring ideas in the data, from which analytical labels could be created. Both coding processes were conducted manually as the size of the sample allowed for this without risk to the quality of the coding process.

The second stage of data analysis involved the process of transforming all the analytical labels into conceptual categories. At this stage, further analysis and regrouping of codes led to the development of conceptual categories, which represent concise abstractions of core themes identified in the data (Charmaz, 2006). More specifically, this step involved writing all the analytical codes on small cards, which then assisted the processes of comparing, sorting, and transforming all the codes into conceptual clusters. This process was then followed by the development of a theoretical map, which formed the last phase of the data analysis. With the work of Charmaz (2006) in mind, at this stage, the definition and properties of each conceptual category were clarified as well as the theoretical links between categories and how these might contribute to the explication of the psychosocial processes investigated in this study. In each phase of the data collection process, the first author was the primary analyst, while the second and third authors provided triangulation through regular reviews of both the procedures and results of the analysis. This included conducting sampling checks on the coding processes as well as examining the development of the conceptual categories and theoretical mapping.

Memo writing, constant comparison and negative case analysis were used throughout the data analysis process. Memo writing is a process for documenting assumptions, reflections, and other considerations which may influence how codes are created, grouped, and transformed into conceptual categories and theoretical maps (Charmaz, 2006). This method helped maintain the transparency of data analysis, which is instrumental for addressing the potential risks of insider bias. In addition, we used constant comparison and negative case analysis as strategies to ensure the saturation of our analysis. These processed entailed repeatedly comparing, sorting and resorting, and revising all codes and conceptual categories until theoretical saturation was achieved. Data that appeared to negate the common patterns found in the analysis was examined to refine the emerging theories or to provide alternative explanations of those theories (Charmaz, 2006).

Lastly, peer-review and member checking allowed us to refine the quality of the data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). This analysis was regularly discussed with other researchers who were familiar with the area of study or the research method employed to obtain credible feedback. The first author conducted the member checking process by returning to the study site to discuss the analysis results with some of the participants. This process was conducted twice, 10 months after the fieldwork and again a further 6 months later.

FINDINGS

The aim of this study was to examine the context specific features that signify the role of a local disability organization in Indonesia as an empowering setting. The analyses led to the identification of three main empowering functions of the setting, as presented in Table 1. These functions are manifested in specific enabling mechanisms that have led to a series of empowered outcomes in relation to members' personal, political, and social identities.

Being a mindset changer: Disability is not a personal inferiority

In Indonesia, denigrating views of disabilities remain normalized and this can lead to psychological consequences,

TABLE 1 Findings of the study: The empowering functions of a local disability organization

Empowering functions	Enabling mechanisms	Empowering outcomes
Being a mindset changer	Nurturing inclusive and critical dialogs	Empowered views of self: Disability is not a personal inferiority
Being an alternative resource center	Facilitating capacity building	Resistance to the patronization of PWD: PWD are not passive objects of intervention
Fostering supportive and courageous allies	Developing socially oriented activities	Emancipatory representations of PWD: PWD as contributing community members

such as shame, a sense of inferiority and lack of self-worth. Jalu's experience illustrates this challenge when he shared his failed attempt to invite his neighbor, who also has a disability, to join the IDN:

> Her parents did not allow her to leave her house. Her parents are afraid that if she goes out, neighbors will make fun of her. She used to go out, but neighbors started saying things that made children afraid of her, things like "Look Dewi is coming, aren't you afraid of her?". Dewi is treated as a scary person who makes children frightened (Jalu, male, member).

In a context where participating in community activities is highly valued, this attitude may intensify a sense of otherness. Moreover, when pathologizing and moralistic views on disabilities remain dominant, it is hard for people to problematize such an attitude. Situated in this kind of social context, the IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by acting as a mindset changer and enabling its members to disrupt the internalization of stigmatizing views on disabilities.

The mindset changer function is activated through critical dialogs that are a part of the everyday interactions in the organization. In this setting, critical awareness of disabilities is promoted and maintained through informal conversations, not formal training sessions. This explains the significance of the IDN as a gathering place, as illustrated in the following excerpt from an interview with Ilham, one of the IDN founders:

> It may seem that we're just having a yarn [informal discussion], but we are actually having a talk about the meanings of our lives, how we actually like to live our lives. I might casually ask a friend, "So, what did you get by attending the training program at the rehabilitation centre? What differences did it make to you?" and he might reply with, "I don't know, just killing time, perhaps" … like that … So, then I would ask him, "killing time? Is that what you want to do for the rest of your life? Don't you have any dreams? A purposeful aim?" … like that … When we are having formal meetings, there isn't such talk. Friends don't open up about their thoughts or ideas. But, when we are having a yarn, they just speak up.

Ilham's reflections highlight the significant role of everyday conversations held in the IDN. Everyday conversations have become a vehicle for promoting transformative dialogs through which its members can recognize, question, and eventually change disabling mindsets. The emphasis on the role of informal conversations also reflects the inclusive atmosphere nurtured in this organization. Instead of using formally structured training sessions, which can be intimidating and patronizing, personal testimonies are used to share critical views on disabilities. Through this sharing, the IDN is able to make people from various backgrounds feel welcome and comfortable to participate.

By continuously engaging in such critical dialogs, the members of the IDN are then able to transform their perspectives on disabilities. They realize that the problems associated with disabilities are primarily rooted in the ways people or they themselves view disabilities rather than in the physical or mental conditions experienced by PWD. In other words, the IDN has facilitated its members to have critical awareness of disabilities as socially constructed oppressions, and develop the required socio-psychological strategies to refute the normalized stigmatizing views on disabilities. This awareness is illustrated in the following excerpts from an interview with Luna:

> I believe that to live a life is to bring goodness for others around us. Before joining the IDN, all that I knew was that I was a burden to other people. But now, my mindset has changed. Although I have limitations, I want to be able to help other people around me. I am still in the learning process, but I want to make sure that I can bring goodness for others around me (Luna, female, member).

This reflection indicates the significance of the IDN as a mindset changer. For Luna, participating in the organization has enabled her to invalidate the depiction of PWD as a burden for others. Similar to Luna, other participants highlighted on more than one occasion how their active involvement in the IDN has gradually transformed the way they respond to disabilities. Aacquiring such an awareness is a meaningful form of personal empowerment considering that the depictions of PWD as inferior individuals remain normalized. In this sense, the IDN has played a profound role as a mindset changer by enabling its members to discards the oppressive portrayal of disability as a form of personal inferiority.

Being an alternative resource center: PWD are not passive objects of intervention

The next empowering feature of the IDN is its ability to function as an alternative resource center from which members can garner instrumental and symbolic resources for resisting the institutionalized patronization of PWD. Although some disability organizations in Indonesia have started to advocate critical perspectives on disabilities, the dominance of deficit-oriented perspectives of disability are still limitedly challenged as reflected in public policies and interventions on disabilities (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Suharto et al., 2016). For example, until 2010, some ministerial decrees still assigned PWD under the category of subpopulation with social problems, along with drug addicts, homeless people, beggars, prostitutes, ex-prisoners, juvenile delinquents, and neglected senior citizens. Such a categorization depicts the predominant patronizing approach toward people with disabilities (Adioetomo et al., 2014).

This analysis showed that dealing with patronizing approaches, particularly from government authorities or officers, is also one of the daily challenges experienced by IDN members. This is evident in the following excerpt from an interview with Amir, who shared his experience of attending a government-sponsored training program:

> I was once invited to attend a training program on animal husbandry. I was told that after the training I would be provided with some hens and an egg incubator machine. But when I received the machine, it did not work, and instead of getting some hens, they gave me six roosters. How on earth, would I be able to start a chicken farm with six roosters? That's the point where I started to think that I was just an object for them, an object for training programs (Amir, male, member).

Amir's experience reflects how government authorities might have contributed to institutionalizing the objectification of PWD. In the Indonesian context, where independent disability organizations have developed since the late 1990s, government departments have been the main public institutions shaping the way disability issues are approached through social welfare policies and rehabilitation program for decades (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Yulianto, 2011).

The majority of disability interventions are managed by government institutions. Hence, dealing with government officers at various points of their life has become common for PWD in Indonesia. It is generally difficult for PWD in Indonesia to access alternative sources of instrumental support due to the limited availability of independent organizations that provide such services (Adioetomo et al., 2014). The situation can be more challenging in rural areas where the presence of independent disability organizations is very rare. This has created a socioeconomic pressure for many PWD that has led them be dependent on the social assistance programs provided by the government (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Yulianto, 2011).

Against this background, the findings of this present study suggest that the IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by enabling its members to resist the institutionalized patronization imposed upon them. This function has been enacted by promoting capacity building activities that may create pathways for its members to strive for their economic independence. These activities include organizing training programs that meet the needs and talents of its members, facilitating networking, and developing a wheelchair service center. As illustrated in the following reflection, these activities have enabled the members of the IDN to have access to an alternative source of instrumental support and not be solely dependent on the government's assistance.

> There are many benefits of joining the IDN. First, I have more friends now. Before joining the IDN, my social circle was very limited, but now I am friends with all these people. If I had not joined IDN, I may never have known them. Also, through the wheelchair service centre, I have got a job making pillow seats which gives me additional income (Harto, male, member).

In the Indonesian context, where the majority of PWD still live with unemployment and poverty, Harto's reflection indicates the significance of the IDN as an accessible resource center. Most of the IDN members are self-employed in home-based microbusinesses or work as casual laborers as access to professional jobs is very limited due to the discriminatory working environments. With such a situation, they struggle to have a steady and adequate income. Their income may be sufficient for paying daily expenses, but little can be saved for costs related to health, housing, education, and unforeseen hardship. Because of this, PWD in Indonesia are conditioned to rely on charities to make a living, especially those managed by government institutions. This situation of dependency has perpetuated the patronizing depiction of PWD as helpless individuals (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Suharto et al., 2016).

Accordingly, the ability of the IDN to provide its members with an alternative means of living has been of paramount importance, both literally and symbolically. Currently, not all the IDN members are able to have employment in the organization. However, the ability of the IDN to create full-time jobs for some of its members is symbolically meaningful as it enables the organization to counter the patronizing depiction of PWD as helpless objects of pity. This is echoed in a reflection from Cahyo:

> All of us are working sincerely to revive ourselves. Let's not allow ourselves to become an object of ridicule for government officials. We are here to find ways to revive ourselves: to work out what we can do to resist the demeaning comments from government officials. As *difabel* we are often looked down upon. So, let's not make ourselves dependent on others, no matter what, we should stand on our own feet (Cahyo, male, member).

Fostering supportive and courageous allies: PWD as contributing community members

The emphasis on interdependence between self and others is a part of the defining features of Javanese social ethics (Guinness, 2009; Koentjaraningrat, 1985). As such, active involvement in community activities is highly valued as an indicator of people's willingness to maintain harmonious social connections and their worth as individuals. Therefore, social exclusion may not only marginalize people from their social environment, but also impede them from fully living their cultural ideal of being dignified persons.

Against this socio-cultural background, the IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by creating relational context and collective activities that have enabled its members to defy their normalized invisibility. The participants reported that their involvement in the IDN has allowed them to experience supportive, egalitarian, and destigmatizing relationships, which has then encouraged them to reject their social exclusion and offset the portrayal of PWD as being incapable of making meaningful contributions to their community. This role is evident in Amir's reflection in which he recalled the participation of the IDN in typical Indonesian annual events:

> We have joined the Independence Day carnivals with other groups in the community. Other than the Independence Day carnival, we have also participated in *Takbiran* nights [the annual religious carnival to mark the end of *Ramadhan*, the fasting month for Muslims]. By participating in such events, we are showing our community our existence. We want to promote an understanding that we do exist and we can do activities along with other groups in our community (Amir, male, member).

Besides encouraging its members to participate in community activities and rituals, the role of the IDN in enabling its members to resist the social invalidation of PWD has been possible through collective activities that allow its members to make meaningful contributions to their community. One such example of an activity is the wheelchair service centre. When we asked the participants about what they valued most about being part of the IDN, most of the participants mentioned the activities through which they can support or provide assistance and services for others. They seem to believe that such activities may enable them to promote empowering representations of PWD as capable and contributing community members and to negate the pejorative characterization of PWD as community burdens. This sentiment is evident in the following excerpt of an interview:

> We develop strategies so that people can see us. Gradually they will begin to realize… “Oh, … I see it is a wheelchair service centre” and they will learn that the mechanics are *difabel* persons and then they may say, “Oh, so they *are* capable”. They will recognize us as *difabel* people who are capable of running a wheelchair service centre, so when they meet a *difabel* person who is a beggar, they will be able to think that not all *difabel* people are like that. I think that is where our action is (Luna, female, member).

Luna's reflection indicates how their activities in the wheelchair service center have a significance that goes beyond their instrumental function. By creating such activities, the IDN has become a symbolic resource through which its members can amplify empowering representations of PWD. In addition, the participants' accounts indicate that having the opportunities to conduct socially oriented activities is also culturally meaningful as they are consistent with the Javanese view of an ideal way of being. Agus, one of the IDN founders, shared this point when he recalled his motivations for initiating the organization:

> Back then, I already had my own home-based business. I never had interactions with all these friends, because I already felt comfortable in my own little world. Financially speaking, I had good income. But then, there is this teaching that says, “you are at your best when you can be a useful person for other people”.

In this reflection, Agus highlighted the moral and cultural ideal that ignited his enthusiasm for establishing the IDN.

DISCUSSION

The research explored the empowering roles of a local disability organization in Indonesia. The findings of this study suggest that the organization has functioned as an empowering setting by fostering relational contexts and collective activities that have enabled its members to develop supportive and courageous allies for advocating more emancipatory representations of PWD. Overall, the findings of the study support previous literature on ECS (e.g., Aber et al., 2011; Maton, 2008; Maton & Salem, 1995; Peterson & Speer, 2000; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000), and specifically the Maton and Brodsky (2011) theory that settings may empower members through cognitive/affective, instrumental, and relational processes through which members can access both tangible and symbolic resources.

In addition, this study adds to the literature by identifying empowering processes, which are culture and context-specific. In the context of a local disability organization in Indonesia, the empowering processes include promoting critical views of disabilities, fostering collective resistance against the hegemonic patronizing attitudes toward PWD, and propagating emancipatory identities. These processes have been shaped by and are responsive to the cultural and political contexts of the community being studied where emphases on religious and communal life have significantly influenced the ways disabilities are generally portrayed and experienced. Situated in such a context, the IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by enacting the cultural ideal of being contributing community members, thereby enabling members of the IDN to counter the patronizing construction of PWD as inferior individuals, passive objects of interventions, and burdens to their community.

Promoting critical consciousness in context is one of the core features of ECS that has been widely discussed in the literature on empowering settings (e.g., Balcazar et al., 2012; Christens et al., 2013; Menon & Allen, 2020). In the context of the organization, critical consciousness raising means supporting members to contest the pathologizing and moralistic views of disabilities that have normalized the stigmatization of PWD as inferior individuals. By engaging in critical dialogs nurtured in the setting, members of the IDN gain awareness of the socio-political embeddedness of their oppressive realities and are able to liberate themselves from self-stigmatizing views of disabilities.

Similar to previous studies on ECS (e.g., Balcazar et al., 2012; Maton & Brodsky, 2011; Salusky et al., 2020), this study also found that the ability of a setting to facilitate members' personal and collective development is central to its role as an empowering setting. In the IDN, this instrumental role operates through its function as an alternative resource center from which members can partake in collective activities that develop their social, economic, and political capacities. Development of such capacities has then created pathways for them to resist the patronizing depictions of PWD as passive objects of interventions.

Another key feature of ECS is its ability to develop supportive and meaningful relational experiences from which members can foster solidarity and emancipatory collective identities (e.g., Christens, 2012; Dutt, 2018; Rappaport, 1995). In this study, we found that participation in the IDN has enabled members to forge supportive alliances for the promotion of collective emancipatory identities that reflect both their religious and cultural worldviews. These emancipatory identities are particularly associated with the idea of being able to make valuable contributions to others and the community. In the rural context where the participants live, the Javanese ethics of social care continues to be a significant feature of their community life as it manifests in the normative obligations that require people to take part in various forms of community activities. However, due to the stigmatization that they experienced, the participants were often alienated from such socio-cultural practices. It is through the alliances and socially oriented activities developed in the IDN that they have been able to assert their empowered identities as contributing community members and fulfill their moral and cultural ideals of a dignified life.

Limitations and implications for future research and practice

This study employed data collection and analysis strategies commonly applied in inductive studies to ensure the credibility of its findings. However, the inductive approach of this study also has limitations. Informed by constructivist methodology, we are aware that the research participants, as well as our positioning and interpretations, might have shaped the nature of our findings. Therefore, we acknowledge the possibilities that others may generate different interpretations of the issue and context being studied. Thus, further studies that employ different theoretical or methodological lenses may generate different understandings on the nature of disability organizations as empowering settings. This is a unique study in this setting and our findings lay out preliminary conceptual insights that can inform future studies for examining a hypothetical model about the empowering functions of disability organizations.

Second, by focusing on the strengths of this local disability organization as an empowering setting, this study might have overlooked any critiques and potential challenges that may be impeding its development. Such a risk may also be doubled by the potential of insider bias, both from the participants in their evaluations of the organization and the first author, given her status as an insider in the cultural context where the study was conducted.

Lastly, despite our conscientious attempts to conduct a study that guided by the values of equality and collaborations, the research team clearly held more control in developing the course of the study than the participants. We recognized the various positionalities that afford researchers power in the context of research despite our efforts to mitigate these effects through ongoing and open communications with participants.

In light of these limitations, future research on similar settings may be benefit from the use of longitudinal approaches to the studies as these may enable researchers to more rigorously identify the extent to which empowering functions and outcomes found in such settings can persist over time and what factors influence their sustainability.

According to the 2020 data reported by the statistical bureau of Yogyakarta province, there were 1824 PWD in the area where the IDN is located (“Informasi Kependudukan D.I. Yogyakarta,” n.d.). This data suggests a limitation of the IDN in its ability to make substantive impacts in the area considering they only have 25 active members. This limitation points to the need for further studies that explore how disability organizations like the IDN can extend their empowering roles and impacts to the wider community. Also, although this study has confirmed some common features of ECS (e.g., the presence of an empowering relational environment), some other aspects have not been adequately explored, such as the role of group leadership. This is a possible avenue for future studies including how relevant theoretical models on ECS developed in different cultural contexts can be adapted to Indonesia.

This study found that resisting the stigmatization and patronization of PWD was an important pathway toward both personal and collective empowerment of the participants. Fostering empowering representations of PWD as competent and contributing community members was crucial part of this resistance, as these representations had both political and cultural significance. This finding supports previous analyses on disability policies and regulations in Indonesia (e.g., Adioetomo et al., 2014), which have highlighted the lingering domination of pathologizing frameworks in the Indonesian disability interventions. Informed by these analyses, this study provides qualitative data which supports the need for advocating the mainstreaming of more empowering disability policies and regulations.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has explicated the transformative features of a local disability organization in Indonesia. While the findings are consistent with the much existing discussions on the concept of empowering settings, our study presented more culture and context-specific characteristics which reflect the particular issues and challenges of advocating disability activism in a rural Indonesian context.

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Disability organizations as empowering settings: challenging stigmatization, promoting emancipation

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Abstract:	This research investigated how a local disability organization in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, has functioned as an empowering setting for its members. Particularly, the study examined the psychosocial mechanisms through which this organization has enabled its members to resist the pervasive discrimination and marginalization commonly imposed upon people with disabilities. The research data were collected through interviews with 18 members of this organization and were analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory approach. The findings suggest that this organization has been experienced as an empowering setting by functioning both as a transformative incubator and a mindset changer. Through these two enabling functions, this organization has enabled its members to challenge the normalized stigmatization, as well as to promote more emancipatory identities. The implications of this study include the need for promoting both research and models of practices, which are informed by historically and culturally contextual understandings of disability.
Additional Information:	
Question	**Response**
Highlights: Bullet Point #1	Exploring models of empowerment, which are grounded and produced in Asian context
Highlights: Bullet Point #2	Expanding community psychology theorization of empowerment
Highlights: Bullet Point #3	Illustrating the intersection between community psychology and disability studies
Highlights: Bullet Point #4	
Highlights: Bullet Point #5	

August 17, 2020

Nicole E. Allen, Ph.D.
Editor, *American Journal of Community Psychology*
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Dear Dr. Allen

I am writing to submit our manuscript entitled, "Disability Organizations as Empowering Settings: Challenging Stigmatization, Promoting Emancipation" to the *American Journal of Community Psychology*. The manuscript reports a qualitative empirical research, that is written in 29 pages long and includes 2 tables.

This current study investigated the psychosocial mechanisms that have enabled a local disability organization in Indonesia to function as an empowering setting. Considering the concern on the limited explorations on models of empowerment, which are grounded and produced in more internationally diverse contexts, we believe that our study will be relevant for expanding community psychology theorization of empowerment. In addition, our study illustrates the intersection between community psychology and disability studies which has been sparsely attended in the field.

The American Psychological Association ethical principles were followed in the study, including by having written informed consent from the research participants. The ethical approval was obtained from the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee on September 29, 2014 (application ID: HRE14-223). We declare that we do not have any conflict of interest that might influence the study. Also, we declare that the manuscript has not been submitted to more than one journal for simultaneous consideration and has not been previously published, either partly or in full.

All of the authors have provided their consent to submit and agreed to the byline order. I will be serving as the corresponding author for this manuscript, and therefore, assuming responsibility to keep my coauthors informed of our progress through the editorial review process, the content of the reviews, and any revisions made. I understand that, if accepted for publication, a certification of authorship form will be required that all coauthors will sign.

Sincerely,

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Statements: Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest and Compliance
with Ethical Standards

Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure Form

American Journal of Community Psychology

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Category for Disclosure	Description of Interest/Arrangement

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Author Signature:

Date: August 3, 2020

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Disability Organizations as Empowering Settings: Challenging Stigmatization, Promoting Emancipation

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Abstract

This research investigated how a local disability organization in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, has functioned as an empowering setting for its members. Particularly, the study examined the psychosocial mechanisms through which this organization has enabled its members to resist the pervasive discrimination and marginalization commonly imposed upon people with disabilities. The research data were collected through interviews with 18 members of this organization and were analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory approach. The findings suggest that this organization has been experienced as an empowering setting by functioning both as a transformative incubator and a mindset changer. Through these two enabling functions, this organization has enabled its members to challenge the normalized stigmatization, as well as to promote more emancipatory identities. The implications of this study include the need for promoting both research and models of practices, which are informed by historically and culturally contextual understandings of disability.

Keywords: Disability, Disability Organizations, Empowering Settings

Disability Organizations as Empowering Settings: Challenging Stigmatization, Promoting Emancipation

Empowerment is a central issue in both community psychology and disability activism. Despite this intersection, there remain limited studies, which connect these two areas to understand the nature of empowerment in disability settings (Balcazar & Suarez-Balcazar, 2017; McDonald, Raymaker, & Gibbons, 2017). Whilst studies have investigated the potential of disability organizations as political platforms for resisting discriminatory systems and practices (e.g., Blackmore & Hodgkins, 2012, Campbell & Oliver, 1996; Dowse, 2001), there remains a gap in explicating how through their involvement in such organizations people may experience personal and collective empowerment (Balcazar & Suarez-Balcazar, 2017; McDonald et al., 2017).

Drawing on the notion of empowering setting (Aber, Maton, & Seidman, 2011; Maton & Salem, 1995; Maton, 2008; Seidman & Capella, 2017), the current study explored the psychosocial mechanisms that have enabled a local disability organization in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, to function as a transformative site. In so doing, this study aimed to contribute to addressing two areas of concern in community psychology. Firstly, it sought to attend to the critiques, which highlight the relatively sparse research and action reports in community psychology that are responsive to the struggles of people with disabilities (e.g., Balcazar & Suarez-Balcazar, 2017; Goodley & Lawthom, 2005; McDonald et al., 2017). Secondly, this study was informed by literature in the field that argue about the need for community psychology to expand its ecology of knowledge by heeding to research and practices that are anchored and produced in diverse regions and countries around the world (e.g., Dutta, 2016; Sonn, 2016). Such a concern is also emphasized in the field of disability studies, which has made a call for more plural knowledge of disability as the field has been predominantly shaped by Euro-American scholarship (e.g., Dirth & Adams, 2019; Grech, 2015; Meekosha, 2011).

Studying Local Disability Organizations as Empowering Settings

As a form of political resistance, disability organizations are generally characterized by activities and practices that seek to liberate people with disabilities (PWD) from their oppression. Such characteristics are especially prominent in organizations that are initiated and led by PWD (Blackmore & Hodgkins, 2012). However, the nature of disability organizations as liberating social settings vary from place to place, depending on the specific socio-historical, cultural and political context in which the organizations exist. Different context will most likely generate different views of and approaches to disability, therefore, require specific strategies and responses (Dirth & Adams, 2019; Fougeyrollas & Beauregard, 2001; Goodley, 2011).

This understanding of disability organizations as contextual settings is in line with the notion of ecological specificity in the studies of empowering settings (Maton & Salem, 1995). As discussed in a number of studies, the notion of empowering setting is a potential concept to investigate how participation in a social setting may facilitate transformative processes and outcomes that enable disadvantaged groups to resist their unjust living conditions (e.g., Aber et al., 2011; Keys, McConnell, Motley, Liao, & McAuliff, 2017; Maton & Salem, 1995; Maton, 2008; Seidman & Capella, 2017). While there are general features, which characterize empowering settings, the particularity of each setting may generate specific processes and mechanisms (e.g., Aber et al., 2011, Maton & Salem, 1995; Maton, 2008; Seidman & Capella, 2017). Drawing on this assumption, we aimed to explore the particular features that characterize a disability organization in Indonesia as an empowering setting. To better describe the research context and the significance of the organization being studied, the next section outlines the general conditions of PWD in Indonesia and how disability has been mainly approached in this country.

Disability in Indonesia: The Pathological Views and the Emergence of Progressive Disability Organizations

Indonesia has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons (CRPD) with Disabilities in 2011. However, this ratification has not brought significant changes in the quality of life of majority PWD in the country (Edwards, 2014). There are approximately 25 million PWD in Indonesia and most of them living with multi-dimensional disadvantages. These include having low economic status, poor health conditions, lack of education and being socially excluded (Adioetomo, Mont, & Irwanto, 2014; Kusumastuti, Pradanasari, & Ratnawati, 2014).

The multiple disadvantages commonly experienced by PWD in Indonesia, to a large extent, are produced and maintained by the domination of pathological views toward disabilities (Adioetomo, 2014; Yulianto, 2015). Informed by such views, disability has been mainly approached as personal tragedies caused by the persons' abnormalities rather than as a result of discriminatory systems and practices. For instance, the domination of pathologizing approaches to disability is reflected in the terms commonly used to describe disabilities (Priyanti, 2018; Suharto, Kuipers, & Dorsett, 2016). In the last few years, there has been a campaign for the use of the term *disabilitas* or *difabel* (the Indonesian version of disability and disabled), yet pathologizing and degrading terms, such as *cacat* (impaired or invalid), *kelainan* (abnormal), and *tuna* (lack) remain popularly utilized (Priyanti, 2018; Suharto et al., 2016). Such a situation has resulted in the pervasive stigmatization of PWD as inferior individuals or burdens to society, and therefore their existence and voices tend to be ignored and excluded from public concern (Kusumastuti et al., 2014).

Aiming to change these situations, progressive disability organizations have started to emerge. These organizations were generally established in the early 2000s as part of larger social changes that marked the shift of the country toward a more democratic political atmosphere (Dibley & Tsaputra, 2019). Before the emergence of these organizations, disability activism in Indonesia was predominantly in the forms of charity programs. The idea of disability as a product of discriminatory social systems had not been part of the public discourse on disability. It is here that the more recently developed disability organizations are taking a leading role (Dibley & Tsaputra , 2019; Suharto, 2011; Yulianto, 2011). Through activities, which range from organizing street demonstrations to advocating the reformation of disability acts, these organizations have gradually raised public awareness on the political nature of disability issues (Dibley & Tsaputra, 2019). It was such a context that orientated this current study toward the social model of disability, which emphasizes the socio-political and cultural embeddedness of disability (Goodley, 2011; Kagan, Lawthom, Duckett, & Burton, 2006; Oliver, 2009). Drawing on this model, we wanted to investigate how as an empowering setting, a local disability organization has been able to challenge the socio-political and cultural mechanisms that have perpetuated the marginalisation of PWD.

Method

Setting

The site of the study – hereafter will be called the Indonesian Disability Network (IDN) – was part of the new emerging organizations, which endorse progressive approaches to disability. This organization is located in Yogyakarta province, Indonesia; an area that was hit by a massive earthquake in 2006 and resulted in thousands of deaths and injured people (Zaumseil, Schwarz, Von Vocano, Sullivan, & Prawitasari-Hadiyono, 2014). This post-disaster situation became a significant context that has shaped the development of the organization. Established in 2009, majority of its members are individuals who have become disabled because of the earthquake.

The year 2013 became a momentous time for the IDN when its members had the idea of initiating an assistive device service center. The idea came from the shared experience of some members who use a wheelchair. When their wheelchair was not working properly, there was no place in the area that could repair it. Buying a new wheelchair was often impossible because of their limited financial capacity and any payment related to assistive devices was not covered by the health insurance provided by the government. In collaboration with a local humanitarian agency, the IDN was eventually able to initiate the service center, which then became an important social site as it served various functions.

Other than addressing the neglected need of many PWD in the area for basic supports regarding their assistive devices, the service center also created job opportunities for some of the members who were previously unemployed or did not have steady income. In addition, it provided space to have supportive interactions. There were always members who stopped by at the workshop and these visits made the place a vibrant gathering site. It was through this kind of gathering that they often shared and discussed their progressive views on disability.

Research Design

The methodology of this study was guided by the transformative paradigm in disability research as proposed by Mertens, Sullivan and Stace (2011). We adopted this paradigm as it encouraged us to situate disability research within the broader social justice framework, therefore, avoiding the reproductions of pathologizing approaches to disability. In addition to this paradigm, we also employed constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000, 2007, 2009). Combining constructivist grounded theory (CGT) and this paradigm is considered instrumental in producing situated theories on disability as these two methodological frameworks assume that knowledge is socially constructed and context dependent.

Participants.

When this study was undertaken, the IDN had about 25 active members. Majority of them had physical disabilities and few members were non-disabled. Their educational attainment ranged from those who do not finished elementary school to those graduated from high school (grade XII). Less than five members went to university. Most participants did not have a steady occupation and were self-employed in home-based micro businesses (e.g., traditional food seller, tailor, and electrician). All of these active members were individually approached and 18 members consented to participate in the study, ranging in age from early 20s to early 50s. Table 1 contains information about the participants, including their pseudonym, gender and length of time involved in the organization.

Data collection.

Following the ethics approval by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, the first author (an insider in the cultural context of the study) commenced the fieldwork processes by the end of October 2014. Fieldwork preparation also included regular consultations with relevant resource persons and organizations in the site of the study, in order to ensure the appropriateness of the fieldwork processes to the local context and its cultural protocol.

Having adopted CGT, semi-structured interviews were used as a data collection method. The first author, a native speaker of *Bahasa* Indonesia and Javanese (the local language used in the area) conducted the interviews. The interview schedules included a series of questions, which were focused on exploring the meanings and significance of this organization for the participants (e.g., How did you become involve in the IDN? What do you value most from it? What are your future aspirations for this organization?). Data collection also included on-site observation, in which the first author involved in daily activities in the organization for five days a week during 5 months duration.

Data analysis.

Informed by Grounded Theory, the data analysis involved the process of transforming descriptive data into theoretical concepts (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). It was started by conducting line-by-line coding that was done manually. Codes were created in Indonesian language, so that sensitivity toward nuances of the conversations could be maintained. This initial stage of the coding process resulted in a list of condensed descriptive labels, which captured the essence of the participants' responses.

In the next phase of data analysis, all of those descriptive codes were transferred into more analytical labels. This process was then followed by transforming all the analytical labels into conceptual categories. Each category represented a higher level of abstraction that grouped together several analytical labels with similar features. Technically, it was conducted by writing all the analytical codes into cards, which assisted the process of comparing, sorting and transforming all those codes into conceptual clusters.

Theoretical mapping formed the last phase of the data analysis process. Informed by Charmaz (2006), at this stage, the definition and properties of each conceptual category were clarified as well as the theoretical links between categories and how these might contribute in explicating the psychosocial processes investigated in this study. In addition, memo writing and member checking were utilized to help refine the quality of the data analysis as these processes encourage a more reflective approach to data interpretation (Charmaz, 2006; Shenton, 2004). The first author did the participant checking process by going back to the study site to discuss the analysis results with some of the participants. This process was conducted twice, 10 months after the fieldwork and again six months afterwards.

Findings and Interpretation

The aim of this study was to examine the psychosocial mechanisms that have enabled a local disability organization to function as a transformative site. The analyses led to the identification of two key themes which characterized the organization as an empowering setting: 1. Its function as a transformation incubator, and 2. Its function as a mindset changer. Each feature is composed by a set of psychosocial functions as presented in Table 2.

A Transformative Incubator

The term 'transformative incubator' refers to the social processes established in the IDN that have enabled the participants to transform their personal and collective potency into tangible resources and capacities. It also explains the role of this organization in transforming the participants' shared experience of being marginalized and discriminated into a collective struggle for autonomy, dignity and equality. These are achieved by fostering supportive connections, facilitating capacity building and promoting economic independence. The general description of each function is detailed as follow.

Fostering supportive connections.

Across the interviews, all of the participants reported that they highly value this organization for its ability to facilitate social connections among PWD in the area. The ability of the IDN to function as a gathering place seems to have a profound meaning for the participants, as social isolation is still a common issue for many PWD in the area. The participants' experiences suggest that they are often being socially disconnected from their community due to the prevailing physical and socio-cultural barriers. Such barriers were reflected in Jalu's explanation when he shared his failed attempt to invite his neighbor who also has a disability to join the IDN:

> Her parent did not allow her to leave her house. Her parent is afraid that when she goes out, neighbors will make fun of her. She used to go out, but then neighbors would

> say something that caused children afraid of her, something like “Look Dewi is coming, aren’t you afraid of her”. Dewi is treated as a scary person who makes children frightened. (Jalu, mid-thirties, casual laborer)

It is within such a social environment that the inclusive interactions offered in the IDN have meaningful effects for the participants. Most of the members live in rural areas where communal solidarity and mutual exchanges are highly emphasized. There are cultural and economic pressures that require people to take part in community activities and rituals. A failure to do so may result in social sanctions and a higher risk of feeling isolated (Guinness, 2009; Newberry, 2007).

Being socially disconnected may also increase the participants’ economic vulnerability due to the lack of adequate public services provided by the Indonesian government. In such a political context, people often have to rely on the network of communal exchange and cooperation in their local communities to be able to meet their basic needs (Guinness, 2009; Newberry, 2007). This situation explains why the ability of the IDN to foster supportive social connections has played a crucial role in shaping this organization as an empowering site.

For those living in an oppressive situation, research has shown that connections with others who face similar circumstances may help the persons to have their subjectivity and experiential realities acknowledged and validated (Balcazar et al., 2012; Maton, 2008; Maton & Salem, 1995; Peterson & Speer, 2000). In line with such research, the participants appeared to highly value the supportive connections that they built in the organization.

Facilitating capacity building.

Another crucial role that has enabled the IDN to function as a transformative incubator is its ability to create capacity-building opportunities. Through a number of activities in the organization (e.g., discussions, trainings and workshops), the participants are able to expand their knowledge and acquire various practical skills. In the context where opportunities for PWD to access mainstream education programs remain very limited, this organization has become a crucial learning center. For example, Luna (late teenager, student) found that participating in the IDN has provided her with an opportunity to learn organizational skills:

> Now, I have more experiences about how to participate in an organization, how to manage an organization effectively, I have the knowledge for it now … now I can see what are the challenges for developing an organization with many people in it, how to manage different opinions that people have, what strategies should be used to bring together different opinions

Luna was one among several others members who experienced the IDN as the first place where they had opportunities for acquiring meaningful personal accomplishments.

Promoting economic independence.

In addition to fostering supportive connections and facilitating capacity building, the IDN has been positively valued for its capacity to promote economic independence. In reflecting their experiences, the participants emphasized the role of this setting in helping them address their economic struggle. Similar to many parts of the world, the oppressive realities commonly experienced by PWD have often been exacerbated by their unemployment and poverty (Grech, 2016). The experience of the members of IDN is not an exception. Possibilities to get a professional role or position are so scarce due to the ongoing discriminatory working environments. As a result, they mainly rely on family's supports or informal jobs, which hardly generate steady and adequate income.

Concerning their economic struggle, the participants appeared to have a shared belief that achieving economic independence is the first and foremost issue should be addressed in order to have meaningful inclusion in the society:

> Hoping of having accessible environments or expecting that the government will show more commitment that will be very difficult. Forget about that. I think what is more important is to find ways so that we can be economically independent. We won't be bothered of not getting health insurance from the government, when we are able to pay the costs by ourselves. We will be able to pay our own insurance if we can get a regular income. (Puan, late twenties, small-scale business owner)

The quotation above suggests how pivotal achieving economic independence is for the participants. As the likelihood for having structural changes seemed so distant, they considered that becoming economically independent would be a powerful springboard for alleviating their disadvantages. In this regard, the IDN has become an instrumental setting that enables the participants to work together for improving their economic capacities.

The participants' reflections further suggest that having sustainable livelihood is not only economically vital but also psychologically meaningful as it generates a sense of self-determination. This point was reflected in Amir's experience when he shared about his disappointment with a training program organized by a government institution:

> I was once invited to attend a training program on animal husbandry. I was told that after the training I would be provided with some hens and an egg incubator machine. But when I received the machine, it did not work, and instead of getting some hens, they gave me six roosters. How on earth, I would be able to start a chicken farm with six roosters? That's the point where I started to think that I was just an object for them, an object for training programs. (Amir, early forties, social worker)

Amir's reflection implies the complex and powerful meanings of becoming economically independent for the participants. Drawing on Amir's reflection, it becomes apparent that achieving economic independence has also functioned as a form of resistance against the patronizing views of PWD as incompetent individuals.

A Mindset Changer

The term ‘mindset changer’ refers to the roles of IDN in disrupting the participants’ denigrating views of disability, particularly by enabling them to approach it more critically. Previously, they tended to view disability as a form of personal inferiority. Through critical conversations built in this organization, the participants gained an understanding of disability as social problems created by discriminatory systems and practices. Consistent with Paulo Freire’s (1996) concept of conscientization, the findings show that building critical awareness of the political embeddedness of the participants’ oppressive realities has a crucial role in facilitating their psychological empowerment.

Based on the data analysis, we identified that the organization has transformed the participants’ perspectives of disability through two mechanisms. Firstly, this setting has enabled the participants to problematize and undo the internalization of stigmatizing representations of PWD. Secondly, it created possibilities for the participants to construct alternative understandings of disability that resonate with their struggle for autonomy, dignity and equality.

Refuting the normalized stigmatization.

The following quotation from Luna illustrates how participating in the IDN has enabled her to reject the negative stereotypes commonly associated with disability. She explained:

> I believe that to live a life is to bring goodness for others around us. Before joining [the IDN], all that I knew was that I was a burden to other people. But now my mindsets have changed. Although I have limitations, I want to be able to help other people around me. I am still in a learning process, but I want to make sure that I can bring goodness for others around me. (Luna, late teenager, student)

Similar to Luna, other participants also highlighted how their active involvement in the IDN has transformed the way they give meanings to disability. Such transformation is manifested in a set of attitudes promoted in the organization that has enabled the participants to reject the internalization of what they identified as the ‘problematic mentalities’. Drawing on the participants’ reflections, the phrase ‘problematic mentalities’ refers to a range of disabling psychosocial issues commonly experienced by PWD as a result of internalizing the demeaning views of disability. These issues include shame, a sense of inferiority, and the feeling of not deserving.

For majority of the participants, rejecting the dominant portrayal of PWD as helpless individuals has become a central process in undoing their internalized oppression. In the case of local communities in Yogyakarta Province, this tendency to portray PWD as helpless individuals has been complicated by the particular situation that emerged during the post disaster period. Following the earthquake, local communities in Yogyakarta had become a working site for a large number of humanitarian and aid agencies (Zaumseil, et al., 2014). These agencies had become important source of supports for the affected communities. However, it has also raised a concern about the possibility of making people dependent to others’ help and neglecting their own collective capacities.

It is against this background that promoting independency has a particular importance in the organization. By enabling its members to lead an independent life, the IDN wants to refute both the pejorative representation of PWD as helpless individuals as well as the dependent mentality present in the post-disaster context. Ilham (one of the initiators of the IDN) shared this point when he described a way of thinking promoted in the organization:

> The most important thing is our mentality. When we started this organization, we always said this to our friends, “no matter how much money people will give you, thousands or even billions, when we are still in that ‘begging for help’ mentality,

> asking people to take care of us, being dependent to other people, to the government; it will be impossible for us to make a progress. Although, we may only have one or two dollar, but when we have that ‘how can I develop what I have’ way of thinking; we can be successful. (Ilham, late twenties, casual laborer)

Anchored in such a mindset, various activities have been developed in order to build the personal and collective capacities of the members of this organization. By having the opportunities to engage in productive activities, the participants are enabled to place their works and achievements as the cornerstone of their personal and collective identities. The participants found that such identifications have afforded them a more empowering sense of self; thereby they are able to counter the perpetuation of deficit-oriented portrayals imposed upon them. In this sense, the IDN is not only pragmatically meaningful, but appears to be also symbolically significant.

Promoting emancipatory identities.

Participating in the IDN has enabled the participants to reconceptualize their identities in ways that promote a sense of dignity and equality. Amir illustrated this point when he recalled the involvement of this organization in the Independence Day Carnival in 2009. That was the first time ever that a disability organization participated in this annual event. Along with other community groups, the IDN took part in the parade that went through the main streets in the area. Recalling his participation in the carnival, Amir shared “by participating in such events, we want to show our community of our existence. We want to promote an understanding that we do exist and we can do activities along with other groups in our community” (Amir, early forties, social worker).

The quotation above illustrates the symbolic meanings built in the organization. Through their shared activities, group members have been enabled to contest their invisibility in public life and thereby challenge the normalized exclusion of PWD. By participating in the organization, collectively they created narratives of themselves as competent and valuable community members. Such a finding is consistent with previous studies that underline the importance of fostering settings through which people can collectively counter the perpetuation of discriminatory attitudes and acts (e.g., Case & Hunter, 2012; Madyaningrum & Sonn, 2011)

When participants were asked about what they value most on being part of the IDN, a frequent response emphasized socially oriented practices. The participants appeared to highly appreciate the opportunities that they have to be involved in shared activities through which they can help or support others, not only fellow members but also those from outside this organization. The participants seem to believe that their involvement in such practices may bring changes in the way society views PWD that is from a passive help receiver to a contributing community member. The following quotation illustrate such a belief:

> In a way we show to others, we develop strategies so that people can see us … we do not do a mass demonstration here and there, but with no realization just an empty talk, … gradually they will learn that “Oh, … I see it is a wheelchair service center” and they will learn that the mechanics are *difabel* persons and they may say, “Oh, so they are capable” and that will make people recognize us as *difabel* persons who are capable to run a wheelchair service center, so when they meet a *difabel* person who become a beggar, they will be able to think that not all of *difabel* persons are like that. I think that is where our action is. (Luna, late teenager, student)

Luna’s reflection suggests the symbolic meanings that the participants ascribed to the opportunities for engaging in socially oriented practices. Through such opportunities, the participants are able to invalidate the demeaning portrayal of PWD as objects of pity. In addition, such a reflection suggests an understanding that the problems with disability have generally stemmed from the stigmatization of PWD, rather than from factors within the PWD themselves. Drawing on these findings, we conclude that the social praxis developed in the IDN have enabled its members to envisage alternative conceptualization of who they are, as a person and group. Consistent with previous research on empowering settings (e.g., Case & Hunter, 2012; Zeldin, Gauley, Barringer, & Chapa 2018), the findings of this study suggest that the organization has functioned as a supportive context for the participants by enabling them to reconstruct the way they give meaning to themselves and their relationships with others.

Discussion

As reflected in number of studies, understanding the importance of settings as a catalyst of social changes is a key area of concern in community psychology (Aber et al., 2011; Cherniss & Deegan, 2000; Maton, 2008; Rappaport, 1995; Sarason, 1972; Seidman & Capella, 2017). In line with such a concern, the research reported explored how a local disability organization has enabled its members to create pathways and social practices for counteracting the discriminatory situations commonly experienced by PWD in Indonesia. The overall findings suggest that the organization has functioned as an empowering setting by enabling the participants to tackle both the material and symbolic aspects of their marginalization. Materially, the IDN has provided its members with relational and instrumental resources with which they can address their social and economic disadvantages. Symbolically, the organization has encouraged the participants to nurture alternative understandings of disability that defy the dominant denigrating portrayals of PWD. Participating in this setting has enabled the participants to gain essential capacities as well as critical awareness, which then generate liberating actions, including the promotion of emancipatory personal and collective identities.

The emancipatory identities promoted in the IDN have been particularly associated with the idea of being able to make valuable contributions to others and the community. Most of the participants highlighted the importance of having the opportunities to be a useful person for others, which reflects both their religious and cultural worldviews. Conducting life in accordance with their religious beliefs and their cultural identity as Javanese people are central to the participants' sense of personhood. Both of these identity components emphasize the notion that the worth of individuals is defined by the good deed they do to other people (Koentjaraningrat, 1989). Especially, in the rural context where the participants live, the Javanese ethics of social care continues to be a significant feature of their community life as it is manifested in the normative obligations that require people to take part in various forms of mutual exchanges and cooperation, which define their communality. However, due to the stigmatization that they experienced, the participants were often alienated from such socio-cultural practices. It is through the IDN that they reclaim their position in their community as it promotes a sense of self as well as a sense of relatedness that reflect their culturally-contextual understanding of a meaningful existence.

Drawing on these findings, we concur with scholars who view empowerment as a situated practice (Beehler & Trickett, 2017; Keys et al., 2017; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Peterson & Speer, 2000). Our findings do support previous literature that link a sense of empowerment with criteria such as having a sense of agency, mastery and control (Balcazar et al., 2012; Maton, 2008; Maton & Brodsky, 2011; Maton & Salem, 1995). For the research participants, however, acquiring those criteria may not necessarily lead to the development of a sense of empowerment when it is not combined with opportunities to extend a sense of interdependence. In this regard, the significance of the IDN as an empowering setting is not merely centered on its ability to advocate the rights of the participants as equal citizens. More than that, it relates with its role as a medium through which the participants can embody their ideal ways of being which are rooted in their religious and cultural beliefs.

In addition, such findings also underline the arguments that advocate the importance of developing situated knowledge of disability (Dirth & Adams, 2019; Grech, 2015; Meekosha, 2011). This current study does suggest the relevance of major disability theories, such as the social model of disability, to understand the participants’ experiences and struggles. Yet, we also found situated psychosocial and cultural dimensions of the participants’ experiences, which need more context-specific notions to better explicate how people experience disabilities in this setting.

The overall findings of this study have demonstrated the potential of a local disability organization as a transformative setting. For practitioners and agencies working in the disability sectors in Indonesia, such findings highlight the importance of promoting models of practices, which are driven and controlled by PWD. Furthermore, the study underscores the need to extend research and interventions, which are informed by historically and culturally contextual understandings of disability. For instance, this study has generated an insight that participating in socially oriented practices, as an enactment of the cultural ideal of interdependence, is central to empowerment in the context being studied. As suggested by some authors (e.g., Dirth & Adams, 2019; Keys et al., 2017), such a characteristic is still rarely emphasized in the literature on both, empowerment and disabilities that emanates from the community psychology research from Europe and the United States.

In addition, by focusing on examining the strengths of a local disability organization as an empowering setting, this study might have overlooked any critique and potential challenges that may impede its development. This limitation implies the need for future research that employ long-term participatory approaches thereby the researcher and the research participants can work together to identify and address the challenges found in the organization. Such research may expand the understanding on how the organization evolves as an empowering setting and how it extends its transformative influences to broader levels.

In conclusion, this study has explicated the transformative psychosocial processes that have enabled a local disability organization to function as an empowering setting in the Indonesian context. Documenting and amplifying the experiences of these PWD and their empowering journey is crucially needed as these may contribute in contesting the patronizing approaches to disability which are still commonly found in many parts of the world, and particularly in Indonesia.

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Table 1

The List of the Research Participants

Years of Involvement in the IDN	Pseudonym	
	Female	Male
1 to ≤ 5 years	Luna	Setyo
	Tulus	Wiji
≥ 5 years	Astuti	Agus
	Gendis	Amir
	Pawestri	Bagas
	Puan	Cahyo
		Harto
		Ilham
		Jalu
		Jatmiko
		Ranto
		Wisnu

Table 2

Findings of the Study: The Role of a Local Disability Organization as an Empowering Setting

Conceptual Category	Sub-category
Transformative incubator	Fostering supportive connections
	Facilitating capacity building
	Promoting economic independence
Mindset changer	Refuting the normalized stigmatization
	Promoting emancipatory identities

Manuscript AJCP-D-20-00188
Disability organizations as empowering settings: challenging stigmatization, promoting emancipation

Dear Dr Madyaningrum,

Thank you for submitting your work to the American Journal of Community Psychology. After extensive review of your manuscript, I would like to encourage you to revise and resubmit your manuscript for re-review. The manuscript has a number of strengths, but given the concerns raised in the reviews, it cannot be published without a major revision. However, should you agree to make major revisions to the manuscript as recommended below and resubmit it within 60 days, I believe it has a reasonable chance for publication.

I urge you to consider this "revise and resubmit" decision to be a positive development, one that is common in the initial review of manuscripts submitted to the American Journal of Community Psychology. Our goal is to publish the field's best work, and so I hope you seriously consider resubmitting a major revision of your manuscript.

If you choose to submit your revised manuscript, include a detailed cover letter that addresses each comment and critique in the reviews, and specifies where and how the revised manuscript has been changed. Along with the reviewers, I ask that you deepen your study's engagement with the existing literature on empowering community settings, specifying the setting-level features that are similar to or different from features of other types of empowering community settings that have been studied elsewhere. You will need to strengthen your description of your analytic methodology and provide additional details on the IDN. I agree with Reviewer 3 that restructuring the paper so that the results and discussion sections are more distinct may help. Finally, in your discussion section, please do address the study's limitations and specific implications for theory and practice/policy related to empowering community settings and PWD.

We know that everyone is making adjustments to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and racial justice uprisings, and that many in our community are pursuing anti-racist efforts in our professional and personal lives. This is an extraordinarily stressful time, especially for our BIPOC colleagues. We recognize that this may require shifts in the timing in which you can respond to reviews and resubmit your work. If you do experience challenges to a timely resubmission, please communicate with us and we will do our best to make adjustments in the production schedule. You can email Allyson M. Blackburn, our editorial assistant, to adjust due dates as necessary (allyson7@illinois.edu).

This moment also calls on us as a journal to recognize our role in legitimizing knowledge and to deepen our commitment to uplifting an anti-racism agenda in scholarship. We are engaged in a number of efforts to do so and welcome your input. To support us in reimagining and generating ideas you can paste this url into your browser to access a survey where you can provide input: https://illinoislas.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6RqpSLWzqduvTbn. I would also welcome meeting via phone, video conference, or corresponding via email (allenne@illinois.edu) if you want to provide input to shape our ongoing efforts.

If you submit the revised manuscript within 60 days, it will be sent out to the original reviewers for re-review, and also will be carefully reviewed in the Editorial Office. However, if you choose not to submit the revised manuscript within 60 days, it will be considered a new submission. If, due to extenuating circumstances, a resubmission within 60 days is not possible, please let me know.

As with your original submission, you may submit the revised manuscript at:
https://www.editorialmanager.com/ajcp/

Your username is: ********
****

Thank you again for submitting your work to the American Journal of Community Psychology.

I look forward to hearing from you soon about whether you plan to revise and resubmit your manuscript.

With best regards,

Brian D. Christens, Ph.D.
Associate Editor
American Journal of Community Psychology

COMMENTS FOR THE AUTHOR:

Reviewer #1:
The manuscript is an interesting qualitative case study of a disability organization in Indonesia that contributes to the psychological empowerment of its members. Eighteen interviews were conducted and analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory approach. The cultural context of the setting is emphasized as important for understanding the nature of the setting and its impact as perceived by members.

1. It is not clear what is added to our existing knowledge about the organizational characteristics and the mechanisms of influence of empowering community settings. For example, is it the case that existing models and concepts need to be modified, or does the case study fully support the existing models? Also, although reference is made to several constructs from the existing literature, many other constructs from the existing literature are not referred to. Are they not necessary for understanding the empowerment process in the current study? Relatedly, it is not clear what is unique about settings for persons with disabilities, and in what ways they are similar to other empowering settings.

2. Several specific aspects of the findings were not fully clear and would benefit from additional information and/or examples. These include:

a. p. 10: "There are cultural and economic pressures that require people to take part in community activities and rituals. A failure to do so may result in social sanctions and a higher risk of feeling isolated (Guinness,2009; Newberry, 2007). (What pressures? What sanctions?)
b. p. 12 "In this regard, the IDN has become an instrumental setting that enables the participants to work together for improving their economic capacities.
(How so? Examples? It is not clear to what extent the setting has been transformative in terms of economic benefit: to all members? most of the members? only a few of the members?
c. p. 15. "Anchored in such a mindset, various activities have been developed in order to build the personal and collective capacities of the members of this organization. By having the opportunities to engage in productive activities, the participants are enabled to place their works and achievements as the cornerstone of their personal and collective identities"
(What activities? For example, are all members employed by the setting? A small number? What activities are being referred to for those not employed?)

3. I am not trained as a qualitative researcher, but likely more detail is needed about the methodology employed (e.g., methods used to address potential insider bias is one that comes to mind). More generally, the discussion section would benefit from an analysis of the strengths and limitations of the methodology used.

4. The study limitations and future research directions do not receive much focus in the discussion section.

5. There are minor writing concerns throughout.

Reviewer #2: I enjoyed reading the manuscript. I think this study reflects several important areas that community psychologists would benefit from learning about. First because it is an example of how an empowering setting operates. Second, because it addresses disability and in particular, the way in which a disability organization developed and the impact it is having on its members. Third because it takes place in a rural region of Indonesia, which is a country that we know little about. I think the manuscript is an important contribution to our field. My only suggestion is to include a brief paragraph describing in some more detail the business component of the organization, with a brief description of the type of work being conducted (I understand it is wheelchair repair, but anything else?), how many people work there (part-time? full time?), does it generates enough income to support the employees?

Reviewer #3: I appreciated the opportunity to read this paper on a truly understudied topic.

However, it was difficult to follow the flow of this paper and it would benefit from a significant restructuring. Furthermore, the authors claim that the design of the study and subsequent analyses were constructivist grounded theory, yet no new theory or theories were introduced or furthered.

It seems more like a narrative analysis was performed on the transcripts that led to resulting themes as they are presented, but not a true grounded theory study. Grounded theory in its purest sense should develop a theory that offers an explanation about the population studied that has not been previously. Citations to understand the methodology in more detail would be helpful — using grounded theory as the research design versus grounded theory as method. It still does not seem that grounded theory was in fact what was done, again, it seems more that qualitative coding was used to generate themes. For example, in the presentation of data the authors showed alignment with previous research, and the themes of refuting stigmatization and embracing emancipatory identities are in direct alignment with existing disability studies' theories and other crip theories.

The presentation of the results, at places, read more like a discussion section with links to literature rather than unpacking or expanding on what the quotes themselves meant in context. In the introduction, there was methodological points being made about this study which also made it hard to follow.

That said, I appreciate the work the author(s) are doing, and the attention to detail on how interviews were conducted and coded in native language.

I would like to hear more from the authors on p. 19 of the implications of this type of work specifically on communities. They started an interesting discussion about the local disability org as a transformative setting — but what made this organization act or be transformative? Were there aspects of the leadership team? How they engaged with participants? Are members of the leadership team disabled — seems to be implied? Interdependence has been discussed quite a bit in the disability literature (see Ed Roberts' work) so I was confused what argument the authors were really trying to make here and the linkages to community psychology.

Other:
- Numerous APA errors throughout

****

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American Journal of Community Psychology

Disability organizations as empowering settings: challenging stigmatization, promoting emancipation

--Manuscript Draft--

Manuscript Number:	
Full Title:	Disability organizations as empowering settings: challenging stigmatization, promoting emancipation
Article Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Disability; Disability Organizations; Empowering Settings
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	Christopher C. Sonn, PhD
	Adrian T. Fisher, PhD
Order of Authors Secondary Information:	
Funding Information:	
Abstract:	This research investigated how a local disability organization in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, has functioned as an empowering setting for its members. This paper particularly discussed context specific features that enable members of this organization to resist the pervasive stigmatization commonly imposed upon people with disabilities. The research data were collected through interviews with 18 members of this organization and were analyzed using the method of constructivist grounded theory. The findings suggest that this organization was experienced as an empowering setting because it functioned as a mindset changer, an alternative resource center, and fostered supportive and courageous allies. Through this empowerment members can challenge the normalized stigmatization and promote more emancipatory identities, particularly in a rural context where some socio-cultural aspects may complicate the disadvantages of people with disabilities. Implications for future research and disability interventions are discussed.
Additional Information:	
Question	**Response**
Highlights: Bullet Point #1	Exploring models of empowerment, which are grounded and produced in Asian context
Highlights: Bullet Point #2	Expanding community psychology theorization of empowerment
Highlights: Bullet Point #3	Illustrating the intersection between community psychology and disability studies
Highlights: Bullet Point #4	
Highlights: Bullet Point #5	

May 20, 2021

Nicole E. Allen, Ph.D.
Editor, *American Journal of Community Psychology*
Department of Psychology
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
603 East Daniel Street
Champaign, Illinois 61820

Dear Dr. Allen

I am writing to resubmit our manuscript entitled, "Disability Organizations as Empowering Settings: Challenging Stigmatization, Promoting Emancipation" to the *American Journal of Community Psychology*. The code for our previous submission was AJCP-D-20-00188R1. The current manuscript is written in 30 pages long and includes one table. We thank you very much for reviewing our previous submission which had assisted us in improving the quality our manuscript.

We sincerely appreciate the valuable feedbacks and suggestions presented by the three reviewers. They had provided us with clear and detailed guidelines on how to revise the manuscript. As suggested by the reviewers, the manuscript had undergone a major restructuring process, so that it could outline better how the current study added to the existing literature on empowering community setting. More detailed responses to all of the reviewers' comments are described below in a point-to-point manner.

The American Psychological Association ethical principles were followed in the study, including by having written informed consent from the research participants. The ethical approval was obtained from the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee on September 29, 2014 (application ID: HRE14-223). We declare that we do not have any conflict of interest that might influence the study. Also, we declare that the manuscript has not been submitted to more than one journal for simultaneous consideration and has not been previously published, either partly or in full.

All of the authors have provided their consent to submit and agreed to the byline order. I will be serving as the corresponding author for this manuscript, and therefore, assuming responsibility to keep my coauthors informed of our progress through the editorial review process, the content of the reviews, and any revisions made. I understand that, if accepted for publication, a certification of authorship form will be required that all coauthors will sign.

Sincerely,

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Responses to the reviewers' comments

Comments from the editor

1. **Deepen your study's engagement with the existing literature on empowering community settings**

   The revised manuscript cited more of key references on empowering settings including the work of Neal (2014); Peterson and Speer (2000), Peterson and Zimmerman (2004), Zimmerman (2000), as well as those which were more recently published, such as the work of Dutt (2018), Menon and Allen (2020), and Salusky, Tull, Case and Soto-Nevarez (2020). These literatures were particularly cited in the section where we presented a brief review on the concept of empowering setting (*Exploring contextual features of empowering settings*, pp. 2 – 3)

2. **Specifying the setting-level features that are similar to or different from features of other types of empowering community settings that have been studied elsewhere.**

   We reorganized our findings, so that we could outline more explicitly the setting-level features which are specific to the context being studied, as summarized in Table 1. (Findings of the study: the empowering functions of a local disability organization).
   In the discussion section, we compared the findings of our study with those that have been reported elsewhere to indicate its similarities and differences.

3. **Strengthen your description of your analytic methodology and provide additional details on the IDN.**

   - A more detailed description of the analytic methodology employed was presented on page nine to 11. This included a more detailed explanation about the methods used to achieve data saturation and to refine the credibility of the data analysis process.

   - Additional details on IDN were provided. This included type of collective activities conducted by the organization outside its main activity of managing an assistive devices service center. This point was presented on page six to seven

4. **Restructuring the paper so that the results and discussion sections are more distinct may help.**

   The whole paper underwent a major restructuring, particularly in the way we organized and presented the findings. In the previous manuscript, we presented the findings under two categories with each had more specific sub categories, and then we explained each of these sub-categories. In the revised version, we organized the findings into three key themes which suggested more directly the specific features found in the study. Comparisons with previous literatures on empowering setting were presented in the discussion section, so that the results and discussion sections became more distinct. These revisions were presented on page 11 to 19.

5. **Address the study's limitations and specific implications for theory and practice/policy related to empowering community settings and PWD.**

   These suggestions were addressed by presenting separate sections for the study's limitations and the implications for theory and practice (page 22 – 23)

<u>Comments from reviewer 1</u>

1. **It is not clear what is added to our existing knowledge about the organizational characteristics and the mechanisms of influence of empowering community settings. For example, is it the case that existing models and concepts need to be modified, or does the case study fully support the existing models? Also, although reference is made to several constructs from the existing literature, many other constructs from the existing literature are not referred to. Are they not necessary for understanding the empowerment process in the current study? Relatedly, it is not clear what is unique about settings for persons with disabilities, and in what ways they are similar to other empowering settings.**

   - The revised version described clearer where the study supports the previous literatures on empowering setting and how it added to the literature by identifying empowering processes which are more context-specific. These revisions were particularly presented in the findings and discussion sections (pp. 11 – 19)

   - The revised version included citations on key references on empowering settings which were not cited in the previous manuscript. This revision was particularly presented in the section entitled, *exploring contextual features of empowering settings* (pp. 2 – 3).

2. **"There are cultural and economic pressures that require people to take part in community activities and rituals. A failure to do so may result in social sanctions and a higher risk of feeling isolated (Guinness,2009; Newberry, 2007). (What pressures? What sanctions?)**

   A more detailed explanation about the cultural and economic pressures was presented on page four of the revised manuscript.

3. **"In this regard, the IDN has become an instrumental setting that enables the participants to work together for improving their economic capacities.**
   (How so? Examples? It is not clear to what extent the setting has been transformative in terms of economic benefit: to all members? most of the members? only a few of the members?

   A more detailed explanation about the significance of IDN in relation to the development of its members' economic capacities was described on page 17.

4. **"Anchored in such a mindset, various activities have been developed in order to build the personal and collective capacities of the members of this organization. By having the opportunities to engage in productive activities, the participants are enabled to place their works and achievements as the cornerstone of their personal and collective identities" (What activities? For example, are all members employed by the setting? A small number? What activities are being referred to for those not employed?)**

   Additional information about the activities that involved all members was presented on page seven.

5. **I am not trained as a qualitative researcher, but likely more detail is needed about the methodology employed (e.g., methods used to address potential insider bias is one that comes to mind). More generally, the discussion section would benefit from an analysis of the strengths and limitations of the methodology used.**

   A more detailed description about the analytic methodology had been added, including the methods used to ensure the credibility of the data analysis process. These revisions were presented on page nine to 11 of the revised manuscript.

6. **The study limitations and future research directions do not receive much focus in the discussion section.**

   Separate sections explaining the implications of the study for theory and practice as well as its limitations had been added on page 22 to 23

<u>Comments from reviewer 2</u>

My only suggestion is to include a brief paragraph describing in some more detail the business component of the organization, with a brief description of the type of work being conducted (I understand it is wheelchair repair, but anything else?), how many people work there (par-time? full time?), does it generate enough income to support the employees?

Additional information to address these questions had been added in the section where we described the IDN (page 7) and in the section where we discussed in more detailed about the economic significance of IDN for its members on page 14 to 17 of the revised manuscript.

<u>Comments from reviewer 3</u>

1. **It was difficult to follow the flow of this paper and it would benefit from a significant restructuring.**

   A major restructuring had been undertaken.

2. **It seems more like a narrative analysis was performed on the transcripts that led to resulting themes as they are presented, but not a true grounded theory study. Grounded theory in its purest sense should develop a theory that offers an explanation about the population studied that has not been previously. Citations to understand the methodology in more detail would be helpful — using grounded theory as the research design versus grounded theory as method.**

   In the method section, we added the explanation about the use of grounded theory as a method. We also provided a more detailed description about the analytic procedures employed in the study, including methods used to ensure the credibility of the data analysis process (pp. 9 – 11).

3. **I would like to hear more from the authors on p. 19 of the implications of this type of work specifically on communities. They started an interesting discussion about the local disability org as a transformative setting — but what made this organization act or be transformative? Were there aspects of the leadership team? How they engaged with participants? Are members of the leadership team disabled — seems to be implied? Interdependence has been discussed quite a bit in the disability literature (see Ed Roberts' work) so I was confused what argument the authors were really trying to make here and the linkages to community psychology.**

   - In the setting section (p. 6), we added information about the setting as a disability organization which is initiated and led by people with disability. Also, we provided a more detailed description about the nature of social interactions nurtured in the organization (p. 13)

   - We changed the way we organized the findings to provide a clearer outline of the context-specific features that enabled IDN to function as an empowering setting, as presented on page 11 to 21. We also created a table that summarized clearer three main empowering functions played by the organization, the enabling mechanisms that manifested these functions and the empowered outcomes experienced by its members.

   - A separate section explaining the implication of the study had also been added on page 22.

Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure Form

American Journal of Community Psychology

When an author or the institution of the author has a relationship, financial or otherwise, with individuals or organizations that could influence the author's work inappropriately, a conflict of interest may exist. Examples of potential conflicts of interest may include but are not limited to academic, personal, or political relationships; employment; consultancies or honoraria; and financial connections, such as stock ownership and funding. Although an author may not feel that there are conflicts, disclosure of relationships and interests that could be viewed by others as conflicts of interest affords a more transparent and prudent process.

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Please complete the items below and submit the form(s), one for each author, **together with your manuscript** via the Editorial Manager submission website.

Manuscript Title: Disability Organizations as Empowering Settings: Challenging Stigmatization, Promoting Emancipation

All Authors: Monica E. Madyaningrum; Christopher C. Sonn; and Adrian T. Fisher

☑ I have included a section, Conflict-of-Interest Statement, in the manuscript (required even if just to state there are no disclosures).

☑ I have no potential conflict of interest pertaining to this submission to *American Journal of Community Psychology*.

Category for Disclosure	Description of Interest/Arrangement

Author Completing this Form: Monica E. Madyaningrum

Author Signature:

Date: May 20, 2021

Ethical Principles Authors are required to state in their submission cover letter that they have complied with APA ethical principles in their treatment of individuals participating in the research, program, or policy described in the manuscript. They should also note that the research has been approved by their organizational unit responsible for the protection of human participants.

Disability Organizations as Empowering Settings: Challenging Stigmatization, Promoting Emancipation

Monica E. Madyaningrum

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We thank the participants for their invaluable contributions to this study.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Monica E. Madyaningrum, Fakultas Psikologi, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Paingan, Maguwoharjo, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 55282. Email: memadyaningrum@usd.ac.id

Abstract

This research investigated how a local disability organization in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, has functioned as an empowering setting for its members. This paper particularly discussed context specific features that enable members of this organization to resist the pervasive stigmatization commonly imposed upon people with disabilities. The research data were collected through interviews with 18 members of this organization and were analyzed using the method of constructivist grounded theory. The findings suggest that this organization was experienced as an empowering setting because it functioned as a mindset changer, an alternative resource center, and fostered supportive and courageous allies. Through this empowerment members can challenge the normalized stigmatization and promote more emancipatory identities, particularly in a rural context where some socio-cultural aspects may complicate the disadvantages of people with disabilities. Implications for future research and disability interventions are discussed.

Keywords: Disability, Disability Organizations, Empowering Settings

Disability Organizations as Empowering Settings: Challenging Stigmatization, Promoting Emancipation

Drawing on the literature of empowering settings (e.g., Aber, Maton, & Seidman, 2011; Maton, 2008; Maton & Salem, 1995; Neal, 2014), the current study examined the mediating processes through which a local disability organization in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, empower its members. This paper seeks to contribute to the literature by explicating context specific features that enable members of this organization to resist the pervasive stigmatization commonly imposed upon people with disabilities. In so doing, this study aimed to address the concerns that highlight the relatively sparse research and action reports in community psychology that are responsive to the struggles of people with disabilities (Balcazar & Suarez-Balcazar, 2017; Goodley & Lawthom, 2005; McDonald, Raymaker, & Gibbons, 2017).

Exploring Contextual Features of Empowering Settings

Underpinned by an ecological perspective on human functioning, community psychology is interested in investigating the roles of settings in promoting both personal and collective empowerment (e.g., Rappaport, 1995; Sarason, 1972; Trickett, 2009; Zimmerman, 2000). This interest is reflected in the notion of Empowering Community Settings (ECS), which is defined as a social space with enabling characteristics and processes that, over time, may lead to empowering outcomes (Maton, 2008).

Studies on ECS have explicated mediating variables and processes that characterise empowering settings (e.g., Maton, 2008; Maton & Salem, 1995; Peterson & Speer, 2000; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000). Specifically, Maton and Brodsky (2011) suggest three key enabling mediators through which ECS generally facilitate member empowerment. The first component is cognitive/affective mediators that suggest how settings facilitate fundamental alterations in awareness, motivation, and self-efficacy of their members by fostering critical consciousness. The second mediator is the instrumental components, which point to the function of settings in promoting capacity building and meaningful roles. The third component is the relational mediators, which explain how settings foster member empowerment by encouraging supportive and inclusive social relations. It is through the combination of these three enabling mediators that ECS typically enact their transformative roles.

Studies on ECS have reported the relevance of these mediators in various types of settings (e.g., Case & Hunter, 2012; Dutt, 2018; Menon & Allen, 2020; Salusky, Tull, Case, & Soto-Nevarez, 2020; Todd, 2012; Zeldin, Gauley, Barringer, & Chapa, 2018). However, these mediators generally manifest differently in each setting. Therefore, more studies should explore context-specific features of empowering settings in different cultural contexts (Christens & Speer, 2011; Maton & Salem, 1995; Speer & Hughey, 1995; Wilke & Speer, 2011).

Living with Disabilities in a Rural Javanese Context

There are approximately 25 million people with disabilities (henceforth, PWD) in Indonesia and most of them living with multi-dimensional disadvantages. These include having low economic status, poor health conditions, lack of education and being socially excluded (Adioetomo, Mont, & Irwanto, 2014; Kusumastuti, Pradanasari, & Ratnawati, 2014). In the rural Javanese context, the context for current study, there are certain socio-cultural aspects that may complicate such disadvantages, including the emphasis on religious and communal life.

Religion has always been an important political and cultural reference in the Indonesian society (Seo, 2013). In the present time, the majority of native Javanese in Yogyakarta adopt Islam as their religion with a minority of the population following Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism (BPS-Statistics of D.I. Yogyakarta Province, 2021). In addition to these principal religions, Javanese people's religious orientations are also underpinned by the Javanese mysticism, popularly known as *Kejawen*. Despite following different religions, people appear to share similar worldviews and ethical frameworks because of their identity as Javanese and the influence of *Kejawen* teachings (Koentjaraningrat, 1985).

One particular feature illustrating the intersection between people's formal religions and *Kejawen* teaching is the belief in the Supreme Being, commonly accepted as a core approach to life. This belief manifests in the understanding that each individual is ascribed to certain roles or fate; therefore, people are oriented toward deterministic views of life (Magniz-Suseno, 1987). Influenced by a deterministic worldview, people typically perceive disabilities as bad personal fate, associated with notions like karma, wrath of God, divine test or punishment. Consequently, PWD often struggle with feelings of guilt, shame, and a sense of inferiority (Thohari, 2013).

Maintaining social harmony and emphasising people's social obligations for providing mutual assistance are also the key features of Javanese tradition. These values are translated into various socio-cultural routines that expect people's active participation, either by providing material supports or volunteering in the activities. A failure to do so may cause social sanctions, in the form of being socially isolated, stigmatized as socially ill persons, or not having access to social resources available in the community (Guinness, 2009; Newberry, 2007). Such an emphasis is even stronger in rural areas that typically evolve from groups of extended families.

Within the broader Indonesian political context, the emphasis on social obligations also represents people's collective strategy to deal with the lack of adequate public services (Guinness, 2009; Newberry, 2007). For having poor public services are still common, people often, have to rely on their own resources and efforts to meet their basic needs such as in health and education. In such conditions, mutual assistance is an important social resource and insurance. For example, during fieldwork for this research we found that borrowing a neighbour's car was a response to the absence of reliable ambulance service. Likewise, participating in a village rotating credit group was a helpful resource for low-income families due to the unreliable social benefits provided by the government. This situation suggests the cultural and economic pressures that encourage people to maintain their involvement in the network of communal exchanges as operationalised through various social routines. Such involvements are highly valued for validating people's willingness to be a resource for each other (Guinness, 2009; Koentjaraningrat, 1985; Newberry, 2007).

For PWD, this socio-cultural context poses both protective and risk factors. For example, during our fieldwork, we found that familial connections could create access to employment for PWD, which otherwise might not be available due to the discriminatory employment environment in Indonesia. However, we observed that such a socio-cultural context could put more stress on the social isolation of PWD and reinforce the pitying views of disability. As documented by Salim and Syafi'ie (2015), the inability of PWD to actively participate in their community (due to the cultural and environmental barriers) may strengthen their experience of social isolation and a sense of inferiority, as well as the portrayal of PWD as community burdens or undeserving community members.

The portrayal of PWD as inferior individuals is circulated through various labels in the wider context of Indonesian society (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Yulianto, 2015). Despite the ongoing campaign for the use of the term *disabilitas* or *difabel* (the Indonesian version of disability and disabled), the use of degrading terms, such as *cacat* and *tuna* (crippled and defect) remain common (Suharto, Kuipers, & Dorsett, 2016). As a result, the pervasive stigmatization of

PWD as inferior individuals and inattention to their existence and voices tend to be normalized (Kusumastuti et al., 2014).

Progressive disability organizations that seek to change these realities started to emerge in the early 2000s. Through activities, ranging from organizing street demonstrations to advocating the reformation of disability acts, these organizations have gradually raised public awareness on the political nature of disabilities (Dibley & Tsaputra, 2019). This context orientated the current study toward the social model of disability, which emphasizes the socio-political and cultural embeddedness of disabilities (Goodley, 2011; Kagan, Lawthom, Duckett, & Burton, 2006; Oliver, 2009). Drawing on this model, we explored how a local disability organization in Indonesia functioned as an empowering setting and enabled its members to challenge the oppression of PWD. We also asked, what are the context-specific features that characterize this organisation as a transformative site?

Method

Setting

The site of the study – hereafter the Indonesian Disability Network (IDN) – is part of the new emerging progressive disability organizations initiated and led by PWD. The IDN is located in Yogyakarta province, Indonesia; an area that was hit by a massive earthquake in 2006 and resulted in thousands of deaths and injured people (Zaumseil, Schwarz, Von Vocano, Sullivan, & Prawitasari-Hadiyono, 2014). This post-disaster context instigated the development of IDN. Established in 2009, majority of its members are individuals who acquired disability because of the earthquake.

In 2013, IDN became prominent for initiating an assistive device service center; it was the first and only organization providing such a service in the area. PWD responded positively to the initiative partly because buying new assistive devices was often impossible because people did not have financial capacity and health insurance provided by the government did not cover assistive devices. This service center also created job opportunities for some members who were previously unemployed or did not have steady income by hiring them as the mechanics.

In addition, the workshop provided a space for IDN to hold regular monthly meetings that involved all members. The meetings were usually used for conducting internal monitoring of the organization (e.g., presenting financial reports), discussing upcoming external events which were relevant for the IDN to participate (e.g., public actions on disability), and for having occasional training sessions. The training sessions introduced practical skills, which aimed to address members' shared needs and concerns. Furthermore, the workshop also became a vibrant gathering place, as there were always members who stopped by to have a chat. It is through these activities that IDN fostered progressive views on disability and nurtured supportive social interactions, as well as became an instrumental information hub for its members.

Participants

When this study was undertaken, the IDN had about 25 active members. Majority of them had physical disabilities and few members were non-disabled. Their educational attainment ranged from those who did not finish elementary school to those who graduated from high school (grade XII). Fewer than five members went to university. Most members did not have a steady occupation and were self-employed in home-based micro businesses (e.g., traditional food seller, tailor, farmer). All of these active members approached and 18 members consented to participate in the study. Majority of the participants had been involved in the IDN for more than five years. Participants included six females and 12 males, ranging in age from early 20s to early 50s.

Research Design

The transformative paradigm in disability research that advocates for emancipatory disability studies informed the study. Methodological implications of this orientation include emphasis on the importance of nurturing equal relationship between researchers and participants (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011). Therefore, we opted for research methods that can accentuate the perspectives of individuals with lived experiences. In doing so, we followed the methods of constructivist grounded theory (CGT), as it provides guidelines for collecting and analyzing data in inductive ways and the approach is instrumental for exploring interpretative meanings of a social process (Charmaz, 2006, 2007).

Data collection.

Following the ethics approval by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, the first author (an insider in the cultural context of the study) commenced the fieldwork processes by the end of October 2014. Fieldwork preparation also included regular consultations with relevant resource persons and organizations in the study site, in order to ensure the appropriateness of the fieldwork processes to the local context and its cultural protocol.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The first author, a native speaker of *Bahasa* Indonesia and Javanese (the local language used in the area) conducted the interviews. The interview schedules included a series of questions, which focused on exploring the meanings and significance of this organization for the participants (e.g., How did you become involve in the IDN? What do you value most from it? What are your future aspirations for this organization?). Data collection included on-site observation in the organization, and participation in daily activities five days a week over five months by the first author.

Data analysis.

Informed by CGT, the data analysis involved the process of transforming data into theoretical concepts (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). Data analysis followed three stages, the process of coding, developing conceptual categories, and creating a theoretical map. Coding involved line-by-line close reading and re-reading of each interview transcription. At this stage, the analyst created descriptive labels to capture meanings evident in the participants' responses in each selected part of the data. Codes were written in Indonesian language and often in the form of *in vivo* labels so that sensitivity toward nuances of the conversations could be maintained as well as lessen the likelihood of imposing preconceived ideas. In the next phase of the coding process, all of these descriptive codes were transformed into more analytical labels. The analyst moved across all interviews to repeatedly compare all the descriptive codes and identify patterns or recurring ideas in the data, from which we created analytical labels. Both coding processes were conducted manually as the size of the sample allowed for this without a risk to the quality of the coding process.

The second stage of data analysis involved the process of transforming all of the analytical labels into conceptual categories. At this stage, further analysis and re-grouping of codes led to the development of conceptual categories, which represent concise abstractions of core themes identified in the data (Charmaz, 2006). Technically, this step involved writing all the analytical codes on small cards, which assisted the process of comparing, sorting and transforming all those codes into conceptual clusters. This process was then followed by developing a theoretical map, which formed the last phase of the data analysis. Informed by Charmaz (2006), at this stage, the definition and properties of each conceptual category were, clarified as well as the theoretical links between categories and how these might contribute in explicating the psychosocial processes investigated in this study.

Memo writing, constant comparison and negative case analysis was used throughout the data analysis process. Memo writing is a process for documenting our assumptions, reflections, and other considerations, which may influence how codes are created, grouped and transformed into conceptual categories and theoretical map (Charmaz, 2006). The methods assisted us in maintaining the transparency of data analysis, which was instrumental for addressing the potential risks of insider bias. In addition, we used constant comparison and negative case analysis as strategies for ensuring the saturation of our analysis. Technically, this process entailed repeatedly comparing, sorting and resorting, moving and revising all codes and conceptual categories until theoretical saturation. We also examined data, which appeared to negate the common patterns found in the analysis in order to refine the emerging theories or to provide alternative explanations of those theories (Charmaz, 2006).

Lastly, peer-review and member checking allowed us to refine the quality of the data analysis. We regularly discussed our analysis with other researchers who were familiar with the area of study or the research method employed in order to obtain credible feedback. The first author did the member checking process by going back to the study site to discuss the analysis results with some of the participants. The researchers conducted this process twice, 10 months after the fieldwork and again six months afterwards.

Findings

The aim of this study was to examine context specific features that signify the roles of a local disability organization in Indonesia as an empowering setting. The analyses led to the identification of three main empowering functions of the setting as presented in Table 1. These functions were manifested in specific enabling mechanisms that led to a series of empowered outcomes in relation to members' personal, political and social identities.

Being a Mindset Changer: Disability is not a Personal Inferiority

In the context where denigrating views of disabilities remain normalized, the empowering features of IDN are evident in its ability to challenge the internalization of such views among its members. Receiving demeaning attitudes is still a common everyday experience of PWD, which can lead to psychological consequences such as shame, a sense of inferiority and lack of self-worth. Jalu's experience illustrates this challenge when he shared his failed attempt to invite his neighbor who also has a disability to join the IDN:

> Her parent did not allow her to leave her house. Her parents are afraid that when she goes out, neighbors will make fun of her. She used to go out, but then neighbors would say something that caused children afraid of her, something like "Look Dewi is coming, aren't you afraid of her". Dewi is treated as a scary person who makes children frightened (Jalu, male, member).

In the context where participating in community activities is highly valued, this attitude may intensify a sense of otherness. Moreover, while pathologizing and moralistic views on disabilities remain dominant, it is even harder for people to problematize such an attitude. Situated in this kind of social context, the IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by acting as a mindset changer, which enables its members to disrupt the internalization of stigmatizing views on disabilities.

The mindset changer function is activated through critical dialogues that is part of the everyday interactions in the organization. In this setting, critical awareness of disabilities was promoted and maintained through informal conversations, not formal training sessions. This explains the significance of the IDN as a gathering place as illustrated in the following excerpt from Ilham, one of the IDN founders:

> It may seem that we’re just having a yarn, but we are actually having a talk about the meanings of our life, how we actually like to live our life. I might casually ask a friend, “so what did you get by attending the training program at the rehabilitation centre, what differences it made to you?” and he might reply, “I don’t know, just to kill a time, perhaps” … like that … So, I would ask him, “killing time? Is that what you want to do for the rest of your life? Don’t you have any dream? A purposeful aim?” … like that … when we are having a formal meeting, there won’t be such a talk, friends will not be open up about their thoughts or ideas. But, when we are having a yarn, they will just speak up. So, it is better to just hang out and have a yarn rather than having a formal meeting but there is no idea shared, and people find it difficult to talk about their concerns.

Ilham’s reflections highlight the significant roles of everyday conversations maintained in the IDN. Everyday conversations became a vehicle for promoting transformative dialogues through which its members can recognize, question and eventually change disabling mindsets. The emphasis on the role of informal conversations also reflects the inclusive atmosphere nurtured in this organization. Instead of using formally structured training sessions, which can be experienced as an intimidating and patronising, personal testimonies are used to share critical views on disabilities and how these may alter their views on themselves and their social experiences. Through this sharing IDN is able to make people from various backgrounds feel welcomed and comfortable to participate.

By continuously engaging in such critical dialogues, the members of IDN are then able to transform their perspectives on disabilities. They realize that the problems with disabilities are primarily rooted in the ways people or they themselves view disabilities rather than in the physical or mental conditions experienced by PWD. In another words, the IDN has facilitated its members to have critical awareness on disabilities as socially constructed oppressions, and therefore require socio-psychological strategies to refute the normalized stigmatizing views on disabilities. This awareness is illustrated in the following excerpts from Luna:

> I believe that to live a life is to bring goodness for others around us. Before joining the IDN, all that I knew was that I was a burden to other people. But now, my mindsets have changed. Although I have limitations, I want to be able to help other people around me. I am still in a learning process, but I want to make sure that I can bring goodness for others around me (Luna, female, member).

This reflection indicates the significance of IDN as a mindset changer. For Luna, participating in this organization has enabled her to invalidate the depiction of PWD as a burden for others. Similar to Luna, the other participants recurrently highlighted how their active involvement in IDN has gradually transformed the way they give meanings and respond to disabilities. In the context where shames associated with disabilities remain normalized, acquiring such an awareness appears to be a meaningful form of personal empowerment. For example, during the 2014 general election (the same year when we conducted the fieldwork), many families did not register their member who experiences disabilities as voters because their feeling of embarrassment (Salim, 2014). It is against this kind of background that IDN has played its profound role as a mindset changer. It has enabled its members to discard the oppressive portrayal of disability as a form of personal inferiority.

Being an Alternative Resource Center: PWD are not Passive Objects of Intervention

The next empowering feature of IDN is its ability to function as an alternative resource center from which members garner instrumental and symbolic resources for resisting the institutionalized patronization of PWD. Although some disability organizations in Indonesia have started to advocate critical perspectives on disabilities, the dominance of deficit-oriented perspectives of disability are still limitedly challenged as reflected in public policies and interventions on disabilities (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Suharto et al., 2016). For example, until 2010, some ministerial decrees still assigned PWD under the category of sub-population with social problems, along with drug addicts, homeless, beggars, prostitutes, ex-prisoners, juvenile delinquents and neglected senior citizens. Such a categorisation depicts the predominant patronizing approach toward disabilities (Adioetomo et al., 2014).

The analysis showed that dealing with patronizing approaches, particularly from government authorities or officers is also part of the daily challenges experienced by IDN members. In the following excerpt from Amir, this is evident when he shared his experience of attending a government-sponsored training program:

> I was once invited to attend a training program on animal husbandry. I was told that after the training I would be provided with some hens and an egg incubator machine. But when I received the machine, it did not work, and instead of getting some hens, they gave me six roosters. How on earth, I would be able to start a chicken farm with six roosters? That’s the point where I started to think that I was just an object for them, an object for training programs (Amir, male, member).

Amir’s experience reflects how government authorities might have contributed to institutionalizing the objectification of PWD. In the Indonesian context, where independent disability organizations have developed since the late 1990s, government departments have for decades been the main public institutions shaping the way disability issues are approached through social welfare policies (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Yulianto, 2011). Through related departments (Department of Social Affairs and the Department of Health), the Indonesian government coordinates the delivery of a range of public services and intervention programs, which specifically target PWD, including the implementation of rehabilitation and social assistance programs (Adioetomo et al., 2014).

Majority of disability interventions are managed by government institutions. Thus, dealing with government officers at various points of their life has become a common experience among PWD in Indonesia. It is generally difficult for PWD in Indonesia to get alternative sources of instrumental supports other than from government institutions due to the limited availability of independent organizations that provide such services (Adioetomo et al., 2014). The situation can be more challenging in rural areas where the presence of independent disability organizations has been very rare. Such a political context has created a socio-economic pressure for many PWD to be dependent to the social assistance programs provided by the government (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Yulianto, 2011).

Against this background, the findings of this present study suggest that IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by enabling its members to resist the institutionalized patronization imposed upon them. This function has been enacted by promoting capacity building activities that may create pathways for its members to strive for their economic independence. These include organizing training programs that meet the needs and talents of its members, facilitating networking and developing the wheelchair service center. As illustrated in the following reflection, these activities have enabled the members of IDN to have alternative source of instrumental supports and not solely rely on the government's assistances.

> There are many benefits of joining IDN, first, I have more friends now. Before joining IDN, my social circle was very limited, but now I can be a friend with all of these people. If I do not join IDN, I may never know them. Also, through the wheelchair service centre, I can have a job of making pillow seats and get additional income (Narto, male, member).

In the Indonesian context where majority of PWD still live with unemployment and in poverty, Narto's reflection suggests the significance of IDN as an accessible resource center. Most of the IDN members are generally self-employed in home-based micro businesses or work as casual laborers, as access to professional jobs are very limited due to the discriminatory working environments. With such a situation, they hardly have steady and adequate income. Their income may sufficient for paying daily expenses, but little can be saved for costs related to health, housing, education and unforeseen hardship. Within such a context, PWD in Indonesia are conditioned to rely on charities to be able to make a living, especially those managed by government institutions. This situation of dependency has perpetuated the patronizing depictions of PWD as helpless individuals (Adioetomo et al, 2014; Yulianto, 2015)

Against such a background, the ability of IDN to provide its members with an alternative mean of living has been of paramount importance, both literally and symbolically. Currently, not all of the IDN members can have employment in the organization. However, the ability of IDN to create full-time jobs for some of its members appears to be symbolically meaningful as it enables this organization to counter the patronizing depictions of PWD as helpless objects of pity, as echoed in Cahyo's reflection:

> All of us are working sincerely to revive ourselves. Let's not make us as an object of ridicule to government officials. We are here to find ways for reviving ourselves, what we can do to resist the demeaning comments from government officials. As *difabel* we are often looked down. So, let's not make ourselves becoming dependent to others, no matter how we should stand on our own feet (Cahyo, male, member).

Fostering Supportive and Courageous Allies: PWD as Contributing Community Members

The emphasis on interdependence between self and others is a part of the defining features of Javanese social ethics (Guinness, 2009; Koentjaraningrat, 1985). As such, active involvement in community activities is highly valued as an indicator of people's willingness to maintain harmonious social connections and their worth as individuals. Therefore, social exclusion may not only marginalize people from their social environment, but also impede people to fully live their cultural ideal of being dignified persons.

Against this socio-cultural background, IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by creating relational context and collective activities that enable its members to defy their normalized invisibility. The participants reported that their involvement in the IDN has allowed them to experience supportive, egalitarian and destigmatizing relationships, which then encouraged them to reject their social exclusion and to offset the portrayal of PWD as incapable of making meaningful contributions to their community. This role is evident in Amir's reflection when he recalled the participation of IDN in typical Indonesian annual events:

> We joined the Independence Day carnival with other groups in the community. Other than the Independence Day carnival, we also participated in *Takbiran* night [annual religious carnival to mark the end of *Ramadhan*, the fasting month for Muslim]. By participating in such events, we want to show our community of our existence. We want

> to promote an understanding that we do exist and we can do activities along with other groups in our community (Amir, male, member).

Besides encouraging its members to participate in community activities and rituals, the role of IDN in enabling its members to resist the social invalidation of PWD is possible through collective activities that allow its members to make meaningful contributions to their community, particularly through the wheelchair service centre. When we asked the participants about what they value most on being part of IDN, most of the participants mentioned the activities through which they can support or provide assistance and services for others. They seem to believe that such activities may enable them to promote empowering representations of PWD as capable and contributing community members and to negate the pejorative characterisation of PWD as community burdens as illustrated in following excerpt:

> In a way we show to others, we develop strategies so that people can see us. Gradually they will learn that "Oh, … I see it is a wheelchair service centre" and they will learn that the mechanics are *difabel* persons and they may say, "Oh, so they are capable" and that will make people recognize us as *difabel* persons who are capable to run a wheelchair service centre, so when they meet a *difabel* person who become a beggar, they will be able to think that not all of *difabel* persons are like that. I think that is where our action is (Luna, female, member).

Luna's reflection suggests how their activities in the wheelchair service center has a significance that goes beyond its instrumental function. By creating such activities, IDN has been experienced as a symbolic resource through which its members can amplify empowering representations of PWD. In addition, the participants' accounts indicate that having the opportunities to conduct socially oriented activities is also culturally meaningful as it is consistent with the Javanese view of an ideal way of being. Agus, one of the IDN founders shared this point when he recalled his motivations for initiating this organization:

> Back then, I already had my own home-based business, I never had interactions with all of these friends because I already felt comfortable in my own little world. Financially speaking, I had had good income. But then, there is this teaching that says, "you are at your best when you can be a useful person for other people".

In this reflection, Agus highlighted the moral and cultural ideal that ignited his enthusiasm for establishing IDN.

Discussion

The research reported explored the empowering roles of a local disability organization in Indonesia. The findings of the current study suggest that the organization has functioned as an empowering setting by fostering relational contexts and collective activities that enable its members to have supportive and courageous allies for advocating more emancipatory representations of PWD. Overall, the findings of the study support previous literature on ECS (e.g., Aber et al., 2011; Maton, 2008; Maton & Salem, 1995; Peterson & Speer, 2000; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000), and specifically Maton and Brodsky (2011) theorization that settings may empower members through cognitive/affective, instrumental and relational processes through which members can access both tangible and symbolic resources.

In addition, the current study adds to the literature by identifying empowering processes, which are culture and context-specific. In the context of a local disability organization in Indonesia, the empowering processes include promoting critical views of disabilities, fostering collective resistance against the hegemonic patronizing attitudes toward PWD, and propagating emancipatory identities. These processes are shaped by and respond to the cultural and political contexts of the community being studied where emphases on religious and communal life have significantly influenced the ways disabilities are generally portrayed and experienced. Situated in such a context, the IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by enacting the cultural ideal of being contributing community members, therefore, enabling members of IDN to counter the patronizing construction of PWD as inferior individuals, passive objects of interventions and burdens to their community.

Promoting critical consciousness in context is one of the core features of ECS that has been widely discussed in the literature on empowering settings (e.g., Balcazar et al., 2012; Christens, Collura, & Tahir, 2013; Menon & Allen, 2020). In the context of the organization, critical consciousness raising means supporting members to contest the pathologizing and moralistic views of disabilities that have normalized the stigmatization of PWD as inferior individuals. By engaging in critical dialogues nurtured in the setting, members of IDN gain awareness on the socio-political embeddedness of their oppressive realities and liberate themselves from self-stigmatizing views of disabilities.

Similar to previous studies on ECS (e.g., Balcazar et al., 2012; Maton & Brodksy, 2011; Salusky et al., 2020), the current research also found that the ability of a setting to facilitate members' personal and collective development is central to its role as an empowering setting. In the IDN, this instrumental role operates through its function as an alternative resource center from which members can have access to collective activities that develop their social, economic as well as political capacities. Such capacities have then created pathways for them to resist the patronizing depictions of PWD as passive object of interventions.

Another key feature of ECS is its ability to develop supportive and meaningful relational experiences from which members can foster solidarity and emancipatory collective identities (e.g., Christens, 2012; Dutt, 2018; Rappaport, 1995). In the current study, we found that participation in the IDN has enabled members to forge supportive alliances for promoting collective emancipatory identities that reflect both their religious and cultural worldviews. These emancipatory identities are particularly associated with the idea of being able to make valuable contributions to others and the community. In the rural context where the participants live, the Javanese ethics of social care continues to be a significant feature of their community life as it manifests in the normative obligations that require people to take part in various forms of community activities. However, due to the stigmatization that they experienced, the participants were often alienated from such socio-cultural practices. It is through the alliances and socially-oriented activities developed in the IDN that they can assert their empowered identities as contributing community members and fulfill their moral and cultural ideals of a dignified life.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

This current study explicated context specific features that enable a local disability organization to function as an empowering setting for its members. The organization has encouraged its members to contest the hegemonic disempowering representations of PWD, which are perpetuated through the normalized prejudicial attitudes maintained through ableism in Indonesia. This finding points toward the need for further studies that explore how disability organizations may extend its empowering roles and impacts to the wider community in other majority world contexts. Specifically, how does this kind organization promote changes in the ways non-disabled persons view and respond to disabilities, especially in a context where moralistic perspectives toward disabilities remain dominant and the roles of religious and communal life are highly valued.

In terms of practical implication, the findings of this study suggest the needs for promoting broader understandings on the idea of accessibility in the context of disability activism. The organization being studied was experienced as an empowering setting not only because it is physically accessible but also because it is socially and culturally accessible by promoting activities and relational environments that validate peoples' socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Bringing such a consideration may be instrumental for designing and implementing interventions in ways that are more responsive to the issue of intersectionality and how it may complicate the daily struggles faced by PWD.

Limitations

Due to the specific context of the study, it is difficult to evaluate the extent to which the findings of this study may be applicable to other disability organizations. In addition, by focusing on the strengths of a local disability organization as an empowering setting, this study might have overlooked any critiques and potential challenges that may impede its development. Lastly, despite our conscientious attempts to conduct a study that promoted equal and collaborative approaches, we have clearly held more control in developing the course of the study than the participants. Employing participatory approaches more rigorously might generate different processes that reflect the meanings of knowledge production as an emancipatory praxis.

Conclusions

This study has explicated the transformative features of a local disability organization in Indonesia. While the findings are consistent with the much existing discussions on the concept of empowering settings, our study presented more culture and context-specific characteristics which reflect the particular issues and challenges of advocating disability activism in a rural Indonesian context.

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Table 1

Findings of the Study: the Empowering Functions of a Local Disability Organization

Empowering functions	Enabling mechanisms	Empowering outcomes
Being a mindset changer	Nurturing inclusive and critical dialogues	Empowered views of self: Disability is not a personal inferiority
Being an alternative resource center	Facilitating capacity buildings	Resistance against the patronization of PWD: PWD are not passive objects of intervention
Fostering supportive and courageous allies	Developing socially oriented activities	Emancipatory representations of PWD: PWD as contributing community members

American Journal of Community Psychology-Decision on your manuscript AJCP-D-21-00104

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on behalf of
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Sat 7/24/2021 9:04 AM
To: Monica Eviandaru Memadyaningrum <memadyaningrum@usd.ac.id>

Ref.: Ms. No. AJCP-D-21-00104
Disability organizations as empowering settings: challenging stigmatization, promoting emancipation
American Journal of Community Psychology

Dear Dr Madyaningrum,

I am pleased to inform you that we are prepared to accept your manuscript pending completion of the revisions described below and receipt of your revised manuscript within 30 days.

If you submit the revised manuscript within 30 days, it will be carefully reviewed in the Editorial Office and will not be subject to a re-review. However, if you do not submit it within 30 days, your resubmission may be sent for re-review and final acceptance of the manuscript is not assured. If, due to extenuating circumstances, a resubmission within 30 days is not possible, please let me know.

If you choose to submit your revised manuscript, include a detailed cover letter that addresses each comment and critique in the reviews, and specifies where and how the revised manuscript has been changed. Please pay particular attention to the requests by Reviewer 2 for additional details on the qualitative data analysis. This is important so that readers can fully contextualize the reported results. Please also carefully proofread the manuscript for style and grammatical correctness before resubmitting.

To submit a revision, go to https://www.editorialmanager.com/ajcp/ and log in as an Author. You will see a menu item call Submission Needing Revision. You will find your submission record there.

Sincerely,

Brian D. Christens, Ph.D.
Associate Editor
American Journal of Community Psychology

Reviewers' comments:

Reviewer #1: I enjoyed reading the article because it highlights an important issue of discrimination and marginalization of PWD due to cultural, religious and deterministic views of life (as explained by the authors). These are topics that are not often discussed in the disability-related literature, specially with regards to societies like Indonesia. I only have a few minor suggestions/edits:
1. With regards to the population with disabilities (25 million cited in p. 4), I was not able to find that same number. I found a reference to 10 million PWD as cited in the "Disability in Indonesia, What can we learn?" article published in August 2017 by the Australia Indonesia partnership for

economic governance. Monash University, Business School. This needs to be clarified.
2. There is no mention of the reliability of the themes identified, which usually involves the main coder and another person who reviews a sample of the transcripts (around 20%). This is a recommended practice for qualitative publications.
3. In the quote on p. 12 there is a reference to "having a yarn." This is an expression not commonly used here in America, so I suggest adding the word "chat" or informal discussion" in parenthesis the first time the word yarn is mentioned.
4. I found several instances where the word "the" should be added: p. 3 line 46: the current study; p. 6 line 51 the majority; p. 7 line 38, The majority; p. 7 line 53 The majority; p. 15 line 21 The majority;

Reviewer #2:
The manuscript is an interesting qualitative case study of a disability organization in Indonesia that contributes to the empowerment of its members through functioning as a mindset changer, an alternative resource center, and fostering allies. Eighteen interviews were conducted and analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory approach. The cultural context of the setting is emphasized as important for understanding the nature of the setting and its impact as perceived by members.

1. How is the concept "empowering community setting" defined for the study? To what extent is the definition being used similar to, and/or different from, other definitions or conceptualizations in the community psychology literature?

2. How many persons with disability reside in the area served by IDN? Are the 25 members served by the IDN a sufficient number to have substantive impact, given the number of persons with disability in the area? Is this a limitation of the IDN?

3. Several additional details of method would be helpful: How long on average did each interview last? Where did they take place? Were the interviews conducted in a private settings? Were interviews audio or video recorded? Who transcribed the interviews? How may pages of transcripts were there in total? Who is the "we" referred to as involved in data analysis?

4. The study limitations noted are on target, but this section would benefit from expansion. For example, is potential insider bias a limitation? Is there possible self-report bias among the participants? Lacking baseline measurement, how confident can one be in the changes reported by participants? Seven IDN members did not take part in the interviews: is this a potential limitation? Lacking a longitudinal design, how confident can one be that the empowering potential articulated is robust and will persist over time? Some aspects of the literature on empowering community settings are confirmed, but others do not appear to be addressed by the research, so it cannot be known the extent to which current models apply well, or not so well, to this unique setting. Is this a limitation to be discussed?

5. The discussion of future research directions would benefit from more development and specificity. For example, how could future research expand our knowledge of one or more aspects of empowering community settings? Of different types of empowering community settings? Should future research be qualitative? Single case study? Multiple case study? Quantitative? Mixed Method? Longitudinal?

6. Are there implications of the findings for governmental policy, and if so, what are they?

7. There are minor writing concerns throughout.

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American Journal of Community Psychology

Disability organizations as empowering settings: challenging stigmatization, promoting emancipation

--Manuscript Draft--

Manuscript Number:	AJCP-D-21-00104R1
Full Title:	Disability organizations as empowering settings: challenging stigmatization, promoting emancipation
Article Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Disability; Disability Organizations; Empowering Settings
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	Christopher C. Sonn, PhD
	Adrian T. Fisher, PhD
Order of Authors Secondary Information:	
Funding Information:	
Abstract:	This research investigated how a local disability organization in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, has functioned as an empowering setting for its members. This paper discusses, in particular, the context specific features that have enabled members of this organization to resist the pervasive stigmatization commonly imposed upon people with disabilities. The research data was collected through interviews with 18 members of the organization and analyzed using the method of constructivist grounded theory. The findings suggest that this organization exists as an empowering setting because it functions as a mindset changer, an alternative resource center, and fosters supportive and courageous allies. Through this empowerment, members can challenge the normalized stigmatization and promote more emancipatory identities, particularly in a rural context where some socio-cultural aspects may further complicate the disadvantages of people with disabilities. Implications for future research and disability interventions are discussed.
Additional Information:	
Question	**Response**
Highlights: Bullet Point #1	Exploring models of empowerment, which are grounded and produced in Asian context
Highlights: Bullet Point #2	Expanding community psychology theorization of empowerment
Highlights: Bullet Point #3	Illustrating the intersection between community psychology and disability studies
Highlights: Bullet Point #4	
Highlights: Bullet Point #5	

August 25, 2021

Nicole E. Allen, Ph.D.
Editor, *American Journal of Community Psychology*
Department of Psychology
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
603 East Daniel Street
Champaign, Illinois 61820

Dear Dr. Allen

I am writing to resubmit our manuscript entitled, "Disability Organizations as Empowering Settings: Challenging Stigmatization, Promoting Emancipation" to the *American Journal of Community Psychology* (AJCP). The code for our previous submission was AJCP-D-21-00104. The current manuscript is written in 30 pages long and includes one table. We appreciate the opportunity for resubmitting this manuscript as well as for all the valuable feedbacks provided.

As suggested by the reviewers, further explanations about the data collection and analysis processes as well as the limitations of the study have been added. In addition, the manuscript has been proofread by a professional proofreader who is a native English speaker to address the writing concerns. More detailed responses to all of the comments are described in a point-to-point manner. We hope with these revisions, the manuscript is now acceptable for publication in the AJCP.

The American Psychological Association ethical principles were followed in the study. The ethical approval was obtained from the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee on September 29, 2014 (application ID: HRE14-223). We declare that we do not have any conflict of interest that might influence the study. Also, we declare that the manuscript has not been submitted to more than one journal for simultaneous consideration and has not been previously published, either partly or in full.

All of the authors have provided their consent to submit and agreed to the byline order. I will be serving as the corresponding author for this manuscript, and therefore, assuming responsibility to keep my coauthors informed of our progress through the editorial review process, the content of the reviews, and any revisions made. I understand that, if accepted for publication, a certification of authorship form will be required that all coauthors will sign.

Sincerely,

Monica E. Madyaningrum, PhD
Senior Lecturer
Universitas Sanata Dharma
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62-274-883037 ext. 52993 (voice)
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Statements: Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest and Compliance
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All Authors: Monica E. Madyaningrum; Christopher C. Sonn; and Adrian T. Fisher

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☒ I have no potential conflict of interest pertaining to this submission to *American Journal of Community Psychology.*

Category for Disclosure	Description of Interest/Arrangement

Author Completing this Form **Adrian Fisher**

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Date: **26/08/2021**

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REVIEWER #1:

I enjoyed reading the article because it highlights an important issue of discrimination and marginalization of PWD due to cultural, religious and deterministic views of life (as explained by the authors). These are topics that are not often discussed in the disability-related literature, especially with regards to societies like Indonesia. I only have a few minor suggestions/edits:

1. **With regards to the population with disabilities (25 million cited in p. 4), I was not able to find that same number. I found a reference to 10 million PWD as cited in the "Disability in Indonesia, What can we learn?" article published in August 2017 by the Australia Indonesia partnership for economic governance. Monash University, Business School. This needs to be clarified.**

   The data about the number of people with disability in Indonesia cited in the manuscript were sourced from:

   Adioetomo, S. M., Mont, D., & Irwanto. (2014). *Persons with disabilities in Indonesia: Empirical facts and implications for social protection policies*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Demographic Institute, Faculty of Economics, University of Indonesia in collaboration with Tim Nasional Percepatan Penanggulangan Kemiskinan (TNP2K). Retrieved from http://www.tnp2k.go.id/downloads/persons-with-disabilities-in-indonesia-empirical-facts-and-implications-for-social-protection-policies

   More specifically, information about the number can be found on page xv and 55. In this reference, it was mentioned that “the prevalence of disability in Indonesia is between 10 and 15 percent” of the population (p. xv). Given the total number of Indonesian populations in 2014 was 255.1 million, therefore, it was estimated that the number of people with disability was approximately 25 million.

   The reference is older than the one mentioned by the reviewer, but the report written by Adioetomo, et al. (2014) provided a more detailed explanation about where the estimated number came from. Therefore, this reference appears to be a better option.

   In the reference mentioned by the reviewer, it was mentioned that the number of people with disability in Indonesia was “at least 10 million” (p. i). However, this reference also explained that this number might have understated its prevalence, given that the number only represents 4.3% of the population.

2. **There is no mention of the reliability of the themes identified, which usually involves the main coder and another person who reviews a sample of the transcripts (around 20%). This is a recommended practice for qualitative publications.**

   This feedback has been addressed on page 10 of the revised manuscript (highlighted in blue), where we provided additional explanation about the data analysis process.

3. **In the quote on p. 12 there is a reference to "having a yarn." This is an expression not commonly used here in America, so I suggest adding the word "chat" or informal discussion" in parenthesis the first time the word yarn is mentioned.**

   Change has been made as suggested on page 12 of the revised manuscript (highlighted in blue)

4. **I found several instances where the word "the" should be added: p. 3 line 46: the current study; p. 6 line 51 the majority; p. 7 line 38, The majority; p. 7 line 53 The majority; p. 15 line 21 The majority;**

   The revised manuscript has been edited by a professional proofreader who is native speaker in English.

REVIEWER #2:

The manuscript is an interesting qualitative case study of a disability organization in Indonesia that contributes to the empowerment of its members through functioning as a mindset changer, an alternative resource center, and fostering allies. Eighteen interviews were conducted and analyzed using a constructivist grounded theory approach. The cultural context of the setting is emphasized as important for understanding the nature of the setting and its impact as perceived by members.

1. How is the concept "empowering community setting" defined for the study? To what extent is the definition being used similar to, and/or different from, other definitions or conceptualizations in the community psychology literature?

The definition of empowering community study applied in the study has been added on page three of the revised manuscript (highlighted in green)

2. How many persons with disability reside in the area served by IDN? Are the 25 members served by the IDN a sufficient number to have substantive impact, given the number of persons with disability in the area? Is this a limitation of the IDN?

This feedback is addressed on page 23 of the revised manuscript where we explained about the limitations of the current study (highlighted in green). We discussed the small number of IDN members compared to the total number of people living with disability in the area as a limitation of the IDN.

3. Several additional details of method would be helpful: How long on average did each interview last? Where did they take place? Were the interviews conducted in a private settings? Were interviews audio or video recorded? Who transcribed the interviews? How may pages of transcripts were there in total? Who is the "we" referred to as involved in data analysis?

Additional details as suggested have been added in the method section (page nine) and highlighted in green.

4. The study limitations noted are on target, but this section would benefit from expansion. For example, is potential insider bias a limitation? Is there possible self-report bias among the participants? Lacking baseline measurement, how confident can one be in the changes reported by participants? Seven IDN members did not take part in the interviews: is this a potential limitation? Lacking a longitudinal design, how confident can one be that the empowering potential articulated is robust and will persist over time? Some aspects of the literature on empowering community settings are confirmed, but others do not appear to be addressed by the research, so it cannot be known the extent to which current models apply well, or not so well, to this unique setting. Is this a limitation to be discussed?

A more detailed explanation about the limitations of the current study has been added on page 21 to 23 of the revised manuscript (highlighted in green)

5. The discussion of future research directions would benefit from more development and specificity. For example, how could future research expand our knowledge of one or more aspects of empowering community settings? Of different types of empowering community settings? Should future research be qualitative? Single case study? Multiple case study? Quantitative? Mixed Method? Longitudinal?

Recommendations for future research has been added on page 22 to 23 of the revised manuscript (highlighted in green)

6. Are there implications of the findings for governmental policy, and if so, what are they?

Recommendations for future research has been added on page 23 of the revised manuscript (highlighted in green)

7. There are minor writing concerns throughout.

The revised manuscript has been edited by a professional proofreader who is native speaker in English.

Disability Organizations as Empowering Settings: Challenging Stigmatization, Promoting Emancipation

Monica E. Madyaningrum

Universitas Sanata Dharma

Christopher C. Sonn and Adrian T. Fisher

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Author Note

Monica E. Madyaningrum, Fakultas Psikologi, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; Christopher C. Sonn and Adrian T. Fisher, The College of Health and Biomedicine, Victoria University, Victoria, Australia.

We thank the participants for their invaluable contributions to this study.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Monica E. Madyaningrum, Fakultas Psikologi, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Paingan, Maguwoharjo, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 55282. Email: memadyaningrum@usd.ac.id

Abstract

This research investigated how a local disability organization in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, has functioned as an empowering setting for its members. This article discusses, in particular, the context specific features that have enabled members of this organization to resist the pervasive stigmatization commonly imposed upon people with disabilities. The research data was collected through interviews with 18 members of the organization and analyzed using the method of constructivist grounded theory. The findings suggest that this organization exists as an empowering setting because it functions as a mindset changer, an alternative resource center, and fosters supportive and courageous allies. Through this empowerment, members can challenge the normalized stigmatization and promote more emancipatory identities, particularly in a rural context where some socio-cultural aspects may further complicate the disadvantages of people with disabilities. Implications for future research and disability interventions are discussed.

Keywords: Disability, Disability Organizations, Empowering Settings

Disability Organizations as Empowering Settings: Challenging Stigmatization, Promoting Emancipation

Drawing on the literature of empowering settings (e.g., Aber, Maton, & Seidman, 2011; Maton, 2008; Maton & Salem, 1995; Neal, 2014), this study examined the mediating processes through which a local disability organization in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, empowers its members. This article sought to contribute to the literature by explicating the context specific features that have enabled members of this organization to resist the pervasive stigmatization commonly imposed upon people with disabilities. With this in mind, this study aimed to address the concerns that highlight the relatively sparse research and action reports in community psychology that are responsive to the struggles of people with disabilities (Balcazar & Suarez-Balcazar, 2017; Goodley & Lawthom, 2005; McDonald, Raymaker, & Gibbons, 2017).

Exploring Contextual Features of Empowering Settings

Underpinned by an ecological perspective on human functioning, community psychology is interested in investigating the roles of settings in promoting both personal and collective empowerment (e.g., Rappaport, 1995; Sarason, 1972; Trickett, 2009; Zimmerman, 2000). This interest is reflected in the notion of Empowering Community Settings (ECS), which are defined as social spaces with enabling characteristics and processes that, over time, may lead to empowering outcomes (Maton, 2008).

Studies on ECS have explicated mediating variables and processes that characterise empowering settings (e.g., Maton, 2008; Maton & Salem, 1995; Peterson & Speer, 2000; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000). Specifically, Maton and Brodsky (2011) suggest three key enabling mediators through which ECS generally facilitate member empowerment. The first component is cognitive/affective mediators that suggest how settings facilitate fundamental alterations in awareness, motivation, and self-efficacy of their members by fostering critical consciousness. The second mediator is the instrumental components, which point to the function of settings in promoting capacity building and meaningful roles. The third component is the relational mediators, which explain how settings foster member empowerment by encouraging supportive and inclusive social relations. It is through the combination of these three enabling mediators that ECS typically enact their transformative roles. Informed by this literature, this study defined ECS as settings that have transformative functions and mechanisms through which members can experience empowering outcomes in relation to their collective struggle for more just living conditions.

Studies on ECS have reported the relevance of these mediators in various types of settings (e.g., Case & Hunter, 2012; Dutt, 2018; Menon & Allen, 2020; Salusky, Tull, Case, & Soto-Nevarez, 2020; Todd, 2012; Zeldin, Gauley, Barringer, & Chapa, 2018). However, these mediators generally manifest differently in each setting. Therefore, more studies are needed to explore context-specific features of empowering settings in different cultural contexts (Christens & Speer, 2011; Maton & Salem, 1995; Speer & Hughey, 1995; Wilke & Speer, 2011).

Living with Disabilities in a Rural Javanese Context

Adioetomo, Mont and Irwanto (2014) reported that Indonesia has 25 million people with disabilities (henceforth, PWD), or 10%–15% of the population. Most of them live with multi-dimensional disadvantages, these include low economic status, poor health condition, lack of education and social exclusion (Adioetomo, et al., 2014). In the rural Javanese context, the context of this study, there are certain socio-cultural aspects that may further complicate these disadvantages, including the emphasis on religious and communal life.

Religion has always been an important political and cultural referent in Indonesian society (Seo, 2013). At present, the majority of native Javanese in Yogyakarta have adopted Islam as their religion with a minority of the population following Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism (BPS-Statistics of D.I. Yogyakarta Province, 2021). In addition to these principal religions, the Javanese people's religious orientations are also underpinned by Javanese mysticism, popularly known as *Kejawen*. Despite following different religions, people appear to share similar worldviews and ethical frameworks because of the influence of *Kejawen* teachings (Koentjaraningrat, 1985).

One particular feature illustrating the intersection between people's formal religions and *Kejawen* teachings is the belief in the Supreme Being, which is commonly accepted as a core approach to life. This belief manifests in the understanding that each individual is ascribed to certain roles or fate; therefore, people are oriented toward deterministic views of life (Magniz-Suseno, 1987). Influenced by a deterministic worldview, people typically perceive disabilities as bad personal fate associated with notions like karma, the wrath of God, a divine test or punishment. Consequently, PWD often struggle with feelings of shame and a sense of inferiority (Thohari, 2013).

Maintaining social harmony and emphasising people's social obligations for providing mutual assistance are also key features of Javanese tradition. These values are translated into various socio-cultural routines that expect people to actively participate, either by providing material support or volunteering in the activities. A failure to do so may result in social sanctions in the form of being socially isolated, stigmatized as a socially ill person, or having access to the social resources available in the community restricted (Guinness, 2009; Newberry, 2007).

Within the broader Indonesian political context, the emphasis on social obligations also represents people's collective strategy to deal with the lack of adequate public services (Guinness, 2009; Newberry, 2007). As poor public services are still common, people often have to rely on their own resources and efforts to meet their basic needs, such as needs for health and education. In these conditions, mutual assistance is an important social resource and insurance. For example, during fieldwork for this research we found that borrowing a neighbour's car had become the response to the absence of a reliable ambulance service. Likewise, participating in a village rotating credit group was a helpful resource for low-income families to counteract the unreliable social benefits provided by the government. This situation suggests there are cultural and economic pressures that encourage people to maintain their involvement in the network of communal exchanges operationalised through various social routines (Guinness, 2009; Koentjaraningrat, 1985; Newberry, 2007).

For PWD, this socio-cultural context poses both protective and risk factors. For example, during our fieldwork, we found that familial connections could create access to employment for PWD, which otherwise might not be available due to the discriminatory employment environment in Indonesia. However, we also observed that the socio-cultural context could put more stress on the social isolation of PWD and reinforce the patronizing views of PWD as community burdens.

The portrayal of PWD as inferior individuals is circulated through various labels in the wider context of Indonesian society (Adioetomo et al., 2014). Despite the ongoing campaign for the use of the terms *disabilitas* or *difabel* (the Indonesian versions of disability and disabled), the use of degrading terms, such as *cacat* and *tuna* (crippled and defect), remain common. As a result, the pervasive stigmatization of PWD as inferior individuals and inattention to their existence and voices has been normalized (Suharto, Kuipers, & Dorsett, 2016).

Progressive disability organizations that seek to change these realities started to emerge in the early 2000s. Through activities ranging from organizing street demonstrations to advocating the reformation of disability acts, these organizations have gradually raised public awareness of the political nature of disabilities (Dibley & Tsaputra, 2019). This context orientated this study toward the social model of disability, which emphasizes the socio-political and cultural embeddedness of disabilities (Goodley, 2011; Kagan, Lawthom, Duckett, & Burton, 2006; Oliver, 2009). Drawing on this model, we explored how a local disability organization in Indonesia functions as an empowering setting and enables its members to challenge the oppression of PWD. We also sought to determine the context-specific features that characterize this organisation as a transformative site.

Method

Setting

The site of this study – hereafter the Indonesian Disability Network (IDN) – is one of the new emerging progressive disability organizations initiated and led by PWD. The IDN is located in Yogyakarta province, Indonesia; an area that was hit by a massive earthquake in 2006 and resulted in thousands of deaths and injuries (Zaumseil, Schwarz, Von Vocano, Sullivan, & Prawitasari-Hadiyono, 2014). The post-disaster context of this earthquake instigated the development of the IDN, which was established in 2009. The majority of its members are individuals who acquired disabilities because of the earthquake.

In 2013, the IDN became prominent for its initiation of an assistive device service center. It was the first and only organization providing such a service in the area. PWD responded positively to the initiative partly because buying new assistive devices was often hindered by low financial capacity and health insurance provided by the government did not cover assistive devices. This service center also created job opportunities for some members, who were previously unemployed or did not have steady income, by hiring them as the mechanics.

In addition, the workshop provided a space for the IDN to hold regular monthly meetings that involved all members. The meetings were usually used for conducting internal monitoring of the organization (e.g., presenting financial reports), discussing upcoming external events which were relevant to members (e.g., public actions related to disability), and having occasional training sessions. The training sessions introduced practical skills, which aimed to address members' shared needs and concerns. Furthermore, the workshop also became a vibrant gathering place, as there were always members who stopped by to have a chat. It is through these activities that the IDN fostered progressive views on disability, nurtured supportive social interactions, and became an instrumental information hub for its members.

Participants

When this study was undertaken, the IDN had about 25 active members. The majority of them had physical disabilities and few members were non-disabled. Their education level ranged from not finishing elementary school to graduating from high school (grade XII). Fewer than five members went to university. Most members did not have a steady occupation and were self-employed in home-based micro businesses (e.g., traditional food seller, tailor, farmer). All active members were approached to take part in this study and 18 members consented to participate. The participants included six females and 12 males, ranging in age from early 20s to early 50s, and the majority of these participants had been involved in the IDN for more than five years.

Research Design

The transformative paradigm in disability research that advocates for emancipatory disability studies informed this study. Methodological implications of this orientation include emphasis on the importance of nurturing equal relationship between researchers and participants (Mertens, Sullivan, & Stace, 2011). Therefore, we opted for research methods that accentuated the perspectives of individuals with lived experiences. In doing so, we followed the methods of constructivist grounded theory (CGT) as it provides guidelines for collecting and analyzing data in inductive ways and this approach is instrumental for exploring interpretative meanings of a social process (Charmaz, 2006, 2007).

Data collection.

After receiving ethics approval from the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, the first author (an insider in the cultural context of the study) commenced fieldwork at the end of October 2014. Fieldwork preparation also included regular consultations with relevant resource people and organizations in the study site, in order to ensure the appropriateness of the fieldwork activities to the local context and its cultural protocol.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The first author, a native speaker of *Bahasa* Indonesia and Javanese (the local language used in the area), conducted the interviews. The interview included a series of questions which focused on exploring the meaning and significance of this organization to the participants (e.g., How did you become involved in the IDN? What do you value most from your involvement in this organization?). Data collection included on-site observation in the organization and participation in daily activities five days a week over five months by the first author.

Interview durations ranged from 30 minutes to one hour. Most of the interviews were conducted at participants' residences at their requests but some took place at the IDN office (i.e., in a room or in the front yard – a space that allowed the interviewer and interviewee to be separated from other people who were at the office). Some participants were interviewed more than once to gain deeper understandings of the information provided. With the participants' permission, the interviews were digitally recorded. A professional service, which ensured data confidentiality, conducted the transcriptions, resulting in 284 pages of single-spaced transcript. The first author read and reread each transcription while listening to the audio record to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions.

Data analysis.

Informed by CGT, the data analysis involved the process of transforming data into theoretical concepts (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). Data analysis followed three stages: the process of coding, developing conceptual categories, and creating a theoretical map. Coding involved line-by-line close reading and re-reading of each interview transcription. At this stage, the analyst created descriptive labels to capture meanings evident in the participants' responses in each selected part of the data. Codes were written in Indonesian language and often in the form of *in vivo* labels so that sensitivity toward nuances of the conversations could be maintained and the likelihood of imposing preconceived ideas was lessened. In the next phase of the coding process, all the descriptive codes were transformed into more analytical labels. The analyst moved across all interviews repeatedly comparing descriptive codes and identifying patterns or recurring ideas in the data, from which analytical labels could be created. Both coding processes were conducted manually as the size of the sample allowed for this without risk to the quality of the coding process.

The second stage of data analysis involved the process of transforming all the analytical labels into conceptual categories. At this stage, further analysis and re-grouping of codes led to the development of conceptual categories, which represent concise abstractions of core themes identified in the data (Charmaz, 2006). More specifically, this step involved writing all the analytical codes on small cards, which then assisted the processes of comparing, sorting, and transforming all the codes into conceptual clusters. This process was then followed by the development of a theoretical map, which formed the last phase of the data analysis. With the work of Charmaz (2006) in mind, at this stage, the definition and properties of each conceptual category were clarified as well as the theoretical links between categories and how these might contribute to the explication of the psychosocial processes investigated in this study. In each phase of the data collection process, the first author was the primary analyst, while the second and third authors provided triangulation through regular reviews of both the procedures and results of the analysis. This included conducting sampling checks on the coding processes as well as examining the development of the conceptual categories and theoretical mapping.

Memo writing, constant comparison and negative case analysis were used throughout the data analysis process. Memo writing is a process for documenting assumptions, reflections, and other considerations which may influence how codes are created, grouped, and transformed into conceptual categories and theoretical maps (Charmaz, 2006). This method helped maintain the transparency of data analysis, which is instrumental for addressing the potential risks of insider bias. In addition, we used constant comparison and negative case analysis as strategies to ensure the saturation of our analysis. These processed entailed repeatedly comparing, sorting and resorting, and revising all codes and conceptual categories until theoretical saturation was achieved. Data that appeared to negate the common patterns found in the analysis was examined in order to refine the emerging theories or to provide alternative explanations of those theories (Charmaz, 2006).

Lastly, peer-review and member checking allowed us to refine the quality of the data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). This analysis was regularly discussed with other researchers who were familiar with the area of study or the research method employed in order to obtain credible feedback. The first author conducted the member checking process by returning to the study site to discuss the analysis results with some of the participants. This process was conducted twice, 10 months after the fieldwork and again a further six months later.

Findings

The aim of this study was to examine the context specific features that signify the role of a local disability organization in Indonesia as an empowering setting. The analyses led to the identification of three main empowering functions of the setting, as presented in Table 1. These functions are manifested in specific enabling mechanisms that have led to a series of empowered outcomes in relation to members' personal, political, and social identities.

Being a Mindset Changer: Disability is not a Personal Inferiority

In Indonesia, denigrating views of disabilities remain normalized and this can lead to psychological consequences, such as shame, a sense of inferiority and lack of self-worth. Jalu's experience illustrates this challenge when he shared his failed attempt to invite his neighbor, who also has a disability, to join the IDN:

> Her parents did not allow her to leave her house. Her parents are afraid that if she goes out, neighbors will make fun of her. She used to go out, but neighbors started saying

> things that made children afraid of her, things like “Look Dewi is coming, aren’t you afraid of her?”. Dewi is treated as a scary person who makes children frightened (Jalu, male, member).

In a context where participating in community activities is highly valued, this attitude may intensify a sense of otherness. Moreover, when pathologizing and moralistic views on disabilities remain dominant, it is hard for people to problematize such an attitude. Situated in this kind of social context, the IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by acting as a mindset changer and enabling its members to disrupt the internalization of stigmatizing views on disabilities.

The mindset changer function is activated through critical dialogues that are a part of the everyday interactions in the organization. In this setting, critical awareness of disabilities is promoted and maintained through informal conversations, not formal training sessions. This explains the significance of the IDN as a gathering place, as illustrated in the following excerpt from an interview with Ilham, one of the IDN founders:

> It may seem that we’re just having a yarn [informal discussion], but we are actually having a talk about the meanings of our lives, how we actually like to live our lives. I might casually ask a friend, “So, what did you get by attending the training program at the rehabilitation centre? What differences did it make to you?” and he might reply with, “I don’t know, just killing time, perhaps” … like that … So, then I would ask him, “killing time? Is that what you want to do for the rest of your life? Don’t you have any dreams? A purposeful aim?” … like that … When we are having formal meetings, there isn’t such talk. Friends don’t open up about their thoughts or ideas. But, when we are having a yarn, they just speak up.

Ilham's reflections highlight the significant role of everyday conversations held in the IDN. Everyday conversations have become a vehicle for promoting transformative dialogues through which its members can recognize, question, and eventually change disabling mindsets. The emphasis on the role of informal conversations also reflects the inclusive atmosphere nurtured in this organization. Instead of using formally structured training sessions, which can be intimidating and patronising, personal testimonies are used to share critical views on disabilities. Through this sharing, the IDN is able to make people from various backgrounds feel welcome and comfortable to participate.

By continuously engaging in such critical dialogues, the members of the IDN are then able to transform their perspectives on disabilities. They realize that the problems associated with disabilities are primarily rooted in the ways people or they themselves view disabilities rather than in the physical or mental conditions experienced by PWD. In other words, the IDN has facilitated its members to have critical awareness of disabilities as socially constructed oppressions, and develop the required socio-psychological strategies to refute the normalized stigmatizing views on disabilities. This awareness is illustrated in the following excerpts from an interview with Luna:

> I believe that to live a life is to bring goodness for others around us. Before joining the IDN, all that I knew was that I was a burden to other people. But now, my mindset has changed. Although I have limitations, I want to be able to help other people around me. I am still in the learning process, but I want to make sure that I can bring goodness for others around me (Luna, female, member).

This reflection indicates the significance of the IDN as a mindset changer. For Luna, participating in the organization has enabled her to invalidate the depiction of PWD as a burden for others. Similar to Luna, other participants highlighted on more than one occasion how their active involvement in the IDN has gradually transformed the way they respond to disabilities. Aacquiring such an awareness is a meaningful form of personal empowerment considering that the depictions of PWD as inferior individuals remain normalized. In this sense, the IDN has played a profound role as a mindset changer by enabling its members to discards the oppressive portrayal of disability as a form of personal inferiority.

Being an Alternative Resource Center: PWD are not Passive Objects of Intervention

The next empowering feature of the IDN is its ability to function as an alternative resource center from which members can garner instrumental and symbolic resources for resisting the institutionalized patronization of PWD. Although some disability organizations in Indonesia have started to advocate critical perspectives on disabilities, the dominance of deficit-oriented perspectives of disability are still limitedly challenged as reflected in public policies and interventions on disabilities (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Suharto et al., 2016). For example, until 2010, some ministerial decrees still assigned PWD under the category of sub-population with social problems, along with drug addicts, homeless people, beggars, prostitutes, ex-prisoners, juvenile delinquents and neglected senior citizens. Such a categorisation depicts the predominant patronizing approach toward people with disabilities (Adioetomo et al., 2014).

This analysis showed that dealing with patronizing approaches, particularly from government authorities or officers, is also one of the daily challenges experienced by IDN members. This is evident in the following excerpt from an interview with Amir, who shared his experience of attending a government-sponsored training program:

> I was once invited to attend a training program on animal husbandry. I was told that after the training I would be provided with some hens and an egg incubator machine. But when

> I received the machine, it did not work, and instead of getting some hens, they gave me six roosters. How on earth, would I be able to start a chicken farm with six roosters? That's the point where I started to think that I was just an object for them, an object for training programs (Amir, male, member).

Amir's experience reflects how government authorities might have contributed to institutionalizing the objectification of PWD. In the Indonesian context, where independent disability organizations have developed since the late 1990s, government departments have been the main public institutions shaping the way disability issues are approached through social welfare policies and rehabilitation program for decades (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Yulianto, 2011).

The majority of disability interventions are managed by government institutions. Hence, dealing with government officers at various points of their life has become common for PWD in Indonesia. It is generally difficult for PWD in Indonesia to access alternative sources of instrumental support due to the limited availability of independent organizations that provide such services (Adioetomo et al., 2014). The situation can be more challenging in rural areas where the presence of independent disability organizations is very rare. This has created a socio-economic pressure for many PWD that has led them be dependent on the social assistance programs provided by the government (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Yulianto, 2011).

Against this background, the findings of this present study suggest that the IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by enabling its members to resist the institutionalized patronization imposed upon them. This function has been enacted by promoting capacity building activities that may create pathways for its members to strive for their economic independence. These activities include organizing training programs that meet the needs and talents of its members, facilitating networking, and developing a wheelchair service center. As illustrated in the following reflection, these activities have enabled the members of the IDN to have access to an alternative source of instrumental support and not be solely dependent on the government's assistance.

> There are many benefits of joining the IDN. First, I have more friends now. Before joining the IDN, my social circle was very limited, but now I am friends with all these people. If I had not joined IDN, I may never have known them. Also, through the wheelchair service centre, I have got a job making pillow seats which gives me additional income (Harto, male, member).

In the Indonesian context, where the majority of PWD still live with unemployment and poverty, Harto's reflection indicates the significance of the IDN as an accessible resource center. Most of the IDN members are self-employed in home-based micro businesses or work as casual laborers as access to professional jobs is very limited due to the discriminatory working environments. With such a situation, they struggle to have a steady and adequate income. Their income may be sufficient for paying daily expenses, but little can be saved for costs related to health, housing, education, and unforeseen hardship. Because of this, PWD in Indonesia are conditioned to rely on charities to make a living, especially those managed by government institutions. This situation of dependency has perpetuated the patronizing depiction of PWD as helpless individuals (Adioetomo et al, 2014; Suharto et al., 2016).

Accordingly, the ability of the IDN to provide its members with an alternative means of living has been of paramount importance, both literally and symbolically. Currently, not all the IDN members are able to have employment in the organization. However, the ability of the IDN to create full-time jobs for some of its members is symbolically meaningful as it enables the organization to counter the patronizing depiction of PWD as helpless objects of pity. This is echoed in a reflection from Cahyo:

> All of us are working sincerely to revive ourselves. Let’s not allow ourselves to become an object of ridicule for government officials. We are here to find ways to revive ourselves: to work out what we can do to resist the demeaning comments from government officials. As *difabel* we are often looked down upon. So, let’s not make ourselves dependent on others, no matter what, we should stand on our own feet (Cahyo, male, member).

Fostering Supportive and Courageous Allies: PWD as Contributing Community Members

The emphasis on interdependence between self and others is a part of the defining features of Javanese social ethics (Guinness, 2009; Koentjaraningrat, 1985). As such, active involvement in community activities is highly valued as an indicator of people’s willingness to maintain harmonious social connections and their worth as individuals. Therefore, social exclusion may not only marginalize people from their social environment, but also impede them from fully living their cultural ideal of being dignified persons.

Against this socio-cultural background, the IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by creating relational context and collective activities that have enabled its members to defy their normalized invisibility. The participants reported that their involvement in the IDN has allowed them to experience supportive, egalitarian, and destigmatizing relationships, which has then encouraged them to reject their social exclusion and offset the portrayal of PWD as being incapable of making meaningful contributions to their community. This role is evident in Amir’s reflection in which he recalled the participation of the IDN in typical Indonesian annual events:

> We have joined the Independence Day carnivals with other groups in the community. Other than the Independence Day carnival, we have also participated in *Takbiran* nights [the annual religious carnival to mark the end of *Ramadhan*, the fasting month for Muslims]. By participating in such events, we are showing our community our existence. We want to promote an understanding that we do exist and we can do activities along with other groups in our community (Amir, male, member).

Besides encouraging its members to participate in community activities and rituals, the role of the IDN in enabling its members to resist the social invalidation of PWD has been possible through collective activities that allow its members to make meaningful contributions to their community. One such example of an activity is the wheelchair service centre. When we asked the participants about what they valued most about being part of the IDN, most of the participants mentioned the activities through which they can support or provide assistance and services for others. They seem to believe that such activities may enable them to promote empowering representations of PWD as capable and contributing community members and to negate the pejorative characterisation of PWD as community burdens. This sentiment is evident in the following excerpt of an interview:

> We develop strategies so that people can see us. Gradually they will begin to realize… "Oh, … I see it is a wheelchair service centre" and they will learn that the mechanics are *difabel* persons and then they may say, "Oh, so they *are* capable". They will recognize us as *difabel* people who are capable of running a wheelchair service centre, so when they meet a *difabel* person who is a beggar, they will be able to think that not all *difabel* people are like that. I think that is where our action is (Luna, female, member).

Luna’s reflection indicates how their activities in the wheelchair service center have a significance that goes beyond their instrumental function. By creating such activities, the IDN has become a symbolic resource through which its members can amplify empowering representations of PWD. In addition, the participants’ accounts indicate that having the opportunities to conduct socially oriented activities is also culturally meaningful as they are consistent with the Javanese view of an ideal way of being. Agus, one of the IDN founders, shared this point when he recalled his motivations for initiating the organization:

> Back then, I already had my own home-based business. I never had interactions with all these friends, because I already felt comfortable in my own little world. Financially speaking, I had good income. But then, there is this teaching that says, “you are at your best when you can be a useful person for other people”.

In this reflection, Agus highlighted the moral and cultural ideal that ignited his enthusiasm for establishing the IDN.

Discussion

The research explored the empowering roles of a local disability organization in Indonesia. The findings of this study suggest that the organization has functioned as an empowering setting by fostering relational contexts and collective activities that have enabled its members to develop supportive and courageous allies for advocating more emancipatory representations of PWD. Overall, the findings of the study support previous literature on ECS (e.g., Aber et al., 2011; Maton, 2008; Maton & Salem, 1995; Peterson & Speer, 2000; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000), and specifically the Maton and Brodsky (2011) theory that settings may empower members through cognitive/affective, instrumental, and relational processes through which members can access both tangible and symbolic resources.

In addition, this study adds to the literature by identifying empowering processes, which are culture and context-specific. In the context of a local disability organization in Indonesia, the empowering processes include promoting critical views of disabilities, fostering collective resistance against the hegemonic patronizing attitudes toward PWD, and propagating emancipatory identities. These processes have been shaped by and are responsive to the cultural and political contexts of the community being studied where emphases on religious and communal life have significantly influenced the ways disabilities are generally portrayed and experienced. Situated in such a context, the IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by enacting the cultural ideal of being contributing community members, thereby enabling members of the IDN to counter the patronizing construction of PWD as inferior individuals, passive objects of interventions, and burdens to their community.

Promoting critical consciousness in context is one of the core features of ECS that has been widely discussed in the literature on empowering settings (e.g., Balcazar et al., 2012; Christens, Collura, & Tahir, 2013; Menon & Allen, 2020). In the context of the organization, critical consciousness raising means supporting members to contest the pathologizing and moralistic views of disabilities that have normalized the stigmatization of PWD as inferior individuals. By engaging in critical dialogues nurtured in the setting, members of the IDN gain awareness of the socio-political embeddedness of their oppressive realities and are able to liberate themselves from self-stigmatizing views of disabilities.

Similar to previous studies on ECS (e.g., Balcazar et al., 2012; Maton & Brodksy, 2011; Salusky et al., 2020), this research also found that the ability of a setting to facilitate members' personal and collective development is central to its role as an empowering setting. In the IDN, this instrumental role operates through its function as an alternative resource center from which members can partake in collective activities that develop their social, economic, and political capacities. Development of such capacities has then created pathways for them to resist the patronizing depictions of PWD as passive objects of interventions.

Another key feature of ECS is its ability to develop supportive and meaningful relational experiences from which members can foster solidarity and emancipatory collective identities (e.g., Christens, 2012; Dutt, 2018; Rappaport, 1995). In this study, we found that participation in the IDN has enabled members to forge supportive alliances for the promotion of collective emancipatory identities that reflect both their religious and cultural worldviews. These emancipatory identities are particularly associated with the idea of being able to make valuable contributions to others and the community. In the rural context where the participants live, the Javanese ethics of social care continues to be a significant feature of their community life as it manifests in the normative obligations that require people to take part in various forms of community activities. However, due to the stigmatization that they experienced, the participants were often alienated from such socio-cultural practices. It is through the alliances and socially-oriented activities developed in the IDN that they have been able to assert their empowered identities as contributing community members and fulfill their moral and cultural ideals of a dignified life.

Limitations and implications for future research and practice

This research employed data collection and analysis strategies commonly applied in inductive studies to ensure the credibility of its findings. However, the inductive approach of this research also has limitations. Informed by constructivist methodology, we are aware that the research participants, as well as our positioning and interpretations, might have shaped the nature of our findings. Therefore, we acknowledge the possibilities that others may generate different interpretations of the issue and context being studied. Thus, further studies that employ different theoretical or methodological lenses may generate different understandings on the nature of disability organizations as empowering settings. This is a unique study in this setting and our findings lay out preliminary conceptual insights that can inform future studies for examining a hypothetical model about the empowering functions of disability organizations.

Secondly, by focusing on the strengths of this local disability organization as an empowering setting, this study might have overlooked any critiques and potential challenges that may be impeding its development. Such a risk may also be doubled by the potential of insider bias, both from the participants in their evaluations of the organization and the first author, given her status as an insider in the cultural context where the study was conducted.

Lastly, despite our conscientious attempts to conduct a study that guided by the values of equality and collaborations, the research team clearly held more control in developing the course of the study than the participants. We recognized the various positionalities that afford researchers power in the context of research despite our efforts to mitigate these effects through ongoing and open communications with participants.

In light of these limitations, future research on similar settings may be benefit from the use of longitudinal approaches to the studies as these may enable researchers to more rigorously identify the extent to which empowering functions and outcomes found in such settings can persist over time and what factors influence their sustainability.

According to the 2020 data reported by the statistical bureau of Yogyakarta province, there were 1824 PWD in the area where the IDN is located (“Informasi Kependudukan D.I.

Yogyakarta," n.d.). This data suggests a limitation of the IDN in its ability to make substantive impacts in the area considering they only have 25 active members. This limitation points to the need for further studies that explore how disability organizations like the IDN can extend their empowering roles and impacts to the wider community. Also, although this study has confirmed some common features of ECS (e.g., the presence of an empowering relational environment), some other aspects have not been adequately explored, such as the role of group leadership. This is a possible avenue for future studies including how relevant theoretical models on ECS developed in different cultural contexts can be adapted to Indonesia.

This study found that resisting the stigmatization and patronization of PWD was an important pathway toward both personal and collective empowerment of the participants. Fostering empowering representations of PWD as competent and contributing community members was crucial part of this resistance, as these representations had both political and cultural significance. This finding supports previous analyses on disability policies and regulations in Indonesia (e.g., Adioetomo et al., 2014), which have highlighted the lingering domination of pathologizing frameworks in the Indonesian disability interventions. Informed by these analyses, this study provides qualitative data which supports the need for advocating the mainstreaming of more empowering disability policies and regulations.

Conclusions

This study has explicated the transformative features of a local disability organization in Indonesia. While the findings are consistent with the much existing discussions on the concept of empowering settings, our study presented more culture and context-specific characteristics which reflect the particular issues and challenges of advocating disability activism in a rural Indonesian context.

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Table 1

Findings of the Study: the Empowering Functions of a Local Disability Organization

Empowering functions	Enabling mechanisms	Empowering outcomes
Being a mindset changer	Nurturing inclusive and critical dialogues	Empowered views of self: Disability is not a personal inferiority
Being an alternative resource center	Facilitating capacity building	Resistance to the patronization of PWD: PWD are not passive objects of intervention
Fostering supportive and courageous allies	Developing socially oriented activities	Emancipatory representations of PWD: PWD as contributing community members

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Disability organizations as empowering settings: Challenging stigmatization, promoting emancipation

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Abstract

This study investigated how a local disability organization in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, has functioned as an empowering setting for its members. This article discusses, in particular, the context specific features that have enabled members of this organization to resist the pervasive stigmatization commonly imposed upon people with disabilities. The research data was collected through interviews with 18 members of the organization and analyzed using the method of constructivist grounded theory. The findings suggest that this organization exists as an empowering setting because it functions as a mindset changer, an alternative resource center, and fosters supportive and courageous allies. Through this empowerment, members can challenge the normalized stigmatization and promote more emancipatory identities, particularly in a rural context where some socio-cultural aspects may further complicate the disadvantages of people with disabilities. Implications for future research and disability interventions are discussed.

KEYWORDS
Disability, Disability organizations, Empowering settings

Highlights

- The current study explores a model of empowerment, which is grounded and produced in Asian context.
- We expand community psychology theorization of empowerment.
- The current study illustrates the intersection between community psychology and disability studies.

INTRODUCTION

Drawing on the literature of empowering settings (e.g., ber et al., 2011; Maton, 2008; Maton & Salem, 1995; eal, 2014), this study examined the mediating processes through which a local disability organization in Yogyakarta Province, Indonesia, empowers its members. This article sought to contribute to the literature by explicating the context specific features that have enabled members of this organization to resist the pervasive stigmatization commonly imposed upon people with disabilities. With this in mind, this study aimed to address the concerns that highlight the relatively sparse research and action reports in community psychology that are responsive to the struggles of people with disabilities (Balcazar & Suarez-Balcazar, 2017; Goodley & Lawthom, 2005; McDonald et al., 2017).

Exploring contextual features of empowering settings

Underpinned by an ecological perspective on human functioning, community psychology is interested in investigating the roles of settings in promoting both personal and collective empowerment (e.g., Rappaport, 1995; Sarason, 1972; Trickett, 2009; Zimmerman, 2000). This interest is reflected in the notion of empowering community settings (ECS), which are defined as social spaces with enabling characteristics and processes that, over time, may lead to empowering outcomes (Maton, 2008).

Studies on ECS have explicated mediating variables and processes that characterize empowering settings (e.g., Maton, 2008; Maton & Salem, 1995; Peterson & Speer, 2000; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000).

Specifically, Maton and Brodsky (2011) suggest three key enabling mediators through which ECS generally facilitate member empowerment. The first component is cognitive/affective mediators that suggest how settings facilitate fundamental alterations in awareness, motivation, and self-efficacy of their members by fostering critical consciousness. The second mediator is the instrumental components, which point to the function of settings in promoting capacity building and meaningful roles. The third component is the relational mediators, which explain how settings foster member empowerment by encouraging supportive and inclusive social relations. It is through the combination of these three enabling mediators that ECS typically enact their transformative roles. Informed by this literature, this study defined ECS as settings that have transformative functions and mechanisms through which members can experience empowering outcomes in relation to their collective struggle for more just living conditions.

Studies on ECS have reported the relevance of these mediators in various types of settings (e.g., Case & Hunter, 2012; Dutt, 2018; Menon & Allen, 2020; Salusky et al., 2020; Todd, 2012; Zeldin et al., 2018). However, these mediators generally manifest differently in each setting. Therefore, more studies are needed to explore context-specific features of empowering settings in different cultural contexts (Christens & Speer, 2011; Maton & Salem, 1995; Speer & Hughey, 1995; Wilke & Speer, 2011).

Living with disabilities in a rural javanese context

Adioetomo et al. (2014) reported that Indonesia has 25 million people with disabilities (henceforth, PWD), or 10%–15% of the population. Most of them live with multidimensional disadvantages, these include low economic status, poor health condition, lack of education, and social exclusion (Adioetomo et al., 2014). In the rural Javanese context, the context of this study, there are certain socio-cultural aspects that may further complicate these disadvantages, including the emphasis on religious and communal life.

Religion has always been an important political and cultural referent in Indonesian society (Seo, 2013). At present, the majority of native Javanese in Yogyakarta have adopted Islam as their religion with a minority of the population following Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism (BPS-Statistics of D.I. Yogyakarta Province, 2021). In addition to these principal religions, the Javanese people's religious orientations are also underpinned by Javanese mysticism, popularly known as *Kejawen*. Despite following different religions, people appear to share similar worldviews and ethical frameworks because of the influence of *Kejawen* teachings (Koentjaraningrat, 1985).

One particular feature illustrating the intersection between people's formal religions and *Kejawen* teachings is the belief in the Supreme Being, which is commonly accepted as a core approach to life. This belief manifests in the understanding that each individual is ascribed to certain roles or fate; therefore, people are oriented toward deterministic views of life (Magnis-Suseno, 1997). Influenced by a deterministic worldview, people typically perceive disabilities as bad personal fate associated with notions like karma, the wrath of God, a divine test or punishment. Consequently, PWD often struggle with feelings of shame and a sense of inferiority (Thohari, 2013).

Maintaining social harmony and emphasizing people's social obligations for providing mutual assistance are also key features of Javanese tradition. These values are translated into various socio-cultural routines that expect people to actively participate, either by providing material support or volunteering in the activities. A failure to do so may result in social sanctions in the form of being socially isolated, stigmatized as a socially ill person, or having access to the social resources available in the community restricted (Guinness, 2009; Newberry, 2007).

Within the broader Indonesian political context, the emphasis on social obligations also represents people's collective strategy to deal with the lack of adequate public services (Guinness, 2009; Newberry, 2007). As poor public services are still common, people often have to rely on their own resources and efforts to meet their basic needs, such as needs for health and education. In these conditions, mutual assistance is an important social resource and insurance. For example, during fieldwork for this study we found that borrowing a neighbor's car had become the response to the absence of a reliable ambulance service. Likewise, participating in a village rotating credit group was a helpful resource for low-income families to counteract the unreliable social benefits provided by the government. This situation suggests there are cultural and economic pressures that encourage people to maintain their involvement in the network of communal exchanges operationalised through various social routines (Guinness, 2009; Koentjaraningrat, 1985; Newberry, 2007).

For PWD, this socio-cultural context poses both protective and risk factors. For example, during our fieldwork, we found that familial connections could create access to employment for PWD, which otherwise might not be available due to the discriminatory employment environment in Indonesia. However, we also observed that the socio-cultural context could put more stress on the social isolation of PWD and reinforce the patronizing views of PWD as community burdens.

The portrayal of PWD as inferior individuals is circulated through various labels in the wider context of Indonesian society (Adioetomo et al., 2014). Despite the ongoing campaign for the use of the terms *disabilitas* or *difabel* (the Indonesian versions of disability and disabled), the use of degrading terms, such as *cacat* and *tuna* (crippled and defect), remain common. As a result, the pervasive stigmatization of PWD as inferior individuals and inattention to their existence and voices has been normalized (Suharto et al., 2016).

Progressive disability organizations that seek to change these realities started to emerge in the early 2000s. Through activities ranging from organizing street demonstrations to advocating the reformation of disability acts, these organizations have gradually raised public awareness of the political nature of disabilities (Dibley & Tsaputra, 2019).

This context orientated this study toward the social model of disability, which emphasizes the socio-political and cultural embeddedness of disabilities (Goodley, 2011; Kagan et al., 2006; Oliver, 2009). Drawing on this model, we explored how a local disability organization in Indonesia functions as an empowering setting and enables its members to challenge the oppression of PWD. We also sought to determine the context-specific features that characterize this organization as a transformative site.

METHOD

Setting

The site of this study—hereafter the Indonesian Disability Network (IDN)—is one of the new emerging progressive disability organizations initiated and led by PWD. The IDN is located in Yogyakarta province, Indonesia; an area that was hit by a massive earthquake in 2006 and resulted in thousands of deaths and injuries (Zaumseil et al., 2014). The postdisaster context of this earthquake instigated the development of the IDN, which was established in 2009. The majority of its members are individuals who acquired disabilities because of the earthquake.

In 2013, the IDN became prominent for its initiation of an assistive device service center. It was the first and only organization providing such a service in the area. PWD responded positively to the initiative partly because buying new assistive devices was often hindered by low financial capacity and health insurance provided by the government did not cover assistive devices. This service center also created job opportunities for some members, who were previously unemployed or did not have steady income, by hiring them as the mechanics.

In addition, the workshop provided a space for the IDN to hold regular monthly meetings that involved all members. The meetings were usually used for conducting internal monitoring of the organization (e.g., presenting financial reports), discussing upcoming external events which were relevant to members (e.g., public actions related to disability), and having occasional training sessions. The training sessions introduced practical skills, which aimed to address members' shared needs and concerns. Furthermore, the workshop also became a vibrant gathering place, as there were always members who stopped by to have a chat. It is through these activities that the IDN fostered progressive views on disability, nurtured supportive social interactions, and became an instrumental information hub for its members.

Participants

When this study was undertaken, the IDN had about 25 active members. The majority of them had physical disabilities and few members were nondisabled. Their education level ranged from not finishing elementary school to graduating from high school (grade XII). Fewer than five members went to university. Most members did not have a steady occupation and were self-employed in home-based microbusinesses (e.g., traditional food seller, tailor, farmer). All active members were approached to take part in this study and 18 members consented to participate. The participants included six females and 12 males, ranging in age from their early twenties to their early fifties, and the majority of these participants had been involved in the IDN for more than five years.

Research design

The transformative paradigm in disability research that advocates for emancipatory disability studies informed this study. Methodological implications of this orientation include emphasis on the importance of nurturing equal relationship between researchers and participants (Mertens et al., 2011). Therefore, we opted for research methods that accentuated the perspectives of individuals with lived experiences. In doing so, we followed the methods of constructivist grounded theory (CGT) as it provides guidelines for collecting and analyzing data in inductive ways and this approach is instrumental for exploring interpretative meanings of a social process (Charmaz, 2006, 2007).

Data collection

After receiving ethics approval from the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, the first author (an insider in the cultural context of the study) commenced fieldwork at the end of October 2014. Fieldwork preparation also included regular consultations with relevant resource people and organizations in the study site, to ensure the appropriateness of the fieldwork activities to the local context and its cultural protocol.

Data was collected using semistructured interviews. The first author, a native speaker of *Bahasa* Indonesia and Javanese (the local language used in the area), conducted the interviews. The interview included a series of questions which focused on exploring the meaning and significance of this organization to the participants (e.g., *How did you become involved in the IDN? What do you value most from your involvement in this organization?*). Data collection included on-site observation in the organization and participation in daily activities five days a week over five months by the first author.

Interview durations ranged from 30 minutes to one hour. Most of the interviews were conducted at participants' residences at their requests but some took place at the IDN office (i.e., in a room or in the front yard—a space that allowed the interviewer and interviewee to be separated from other people who were at the office). Some participants were interviewed more than once to gain deeper understandings of the information provided. With the participants' permission, the interviews were digitally recorded. A professional service, which ensured data confidentiality, conducted the transcriptions, resulting in 284 pages of single-spaced transcript. The first author read and reread each transcription while listening to the audio record to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions.

Data analysis

Informed by CGT, the data analysis involved the process of transforming data into theoretical concepts (Mills et al., 2006). Data analysis followed three stages: the process of coding, developing conceptual categories, and creating a theoretical map. Coding involved line-by-line close reading and rereading of each interview transcription. At this stage, the analyst created descriptive labels to capture meanings evident in the participants' responses in each selected part of the data. Codes were written in Indonesian language and often in the form of in vivo labels so that sensitivity toward nuances of the conversations could be maintained and the likelihood of imposing preconceived ideas was lessened. In the next phase of the coding process, all the descriptive codes were transformed into more analytical labels. The analyst moved across all interviews repeatedly comparing descriptive codes and identifying patterns or recurring ideas in the data, from which analytical labels could be created. Both coding processes were conducted manually as the size of the sample allowed for this without risk to the quality of the coding process.

The second stage of data analysis involved the process of transforming all the analytical labels into conceptual categories. At this stage, further analysis and regrouping of codes led to the development of conceptual categories, which represent concise abstractions of core themes identified in the data (Charmaz, 2006). More specifically, this step involved writing all the analytical codes on small cards, which then assisted the processes of comparing, sorting, and transforming all the codes into conceptual clusters. This process was then followed by the development of a theoretical map, which formed the last phase of the data analysis. With the work of Charmaz (2006) in mind, at this stage, the definition and properties of each conceptual category were clarified as well as the theoretical links between categories and how these might contribute to the explication of the psychosocial processes investigated in this study. In each phase of the data collection process, the first author was the primary analyst, while the second and third authors provided triangulation through regular reviews of both the procedures and results of the analysis. This included conducting sampling checks on the coding processes as well as examining the development of the conceptual categories and theoretical mapping.

Memo writing, constant comparison and negative case analysis were used throughout the data analysis process. Memo writing is a process for documenting assumptions, reflections, and other considerations which may influence how codes are created, grouped, and transformed into conceptual categories and theoretical maps (Charmaz, 2006). This method helped maintain the transparency of data analysis, which is instrumental for addressing the potential risks of insider bias. In addition, we used constant comparison and negative case analysis as strategies to ensure the saturation of our analysis. These processed entailed repeatedly comparing, sorting and resorting, and revising all codes and conceptual categories until theoretical saturation was achieved. Data that appeared to negate the common patterns found in the analysis was examined to refine the emerging theories or to provide alternative explanations of those theories (Charmaz, 2006).

Lastly, peer-review and member checking allowed us to refine the quality of the data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). This analysis was regularly discussed with other researchers who were familiar with the area of study or the research method employed to obtain credible feedback. The first author conducted the member checking process by returning to the study site to discuss the analysis results with some of the participants. This process was conducted twice, 10 months after the fieldwork and again a further 6 months later.

FINDINGS

The aim of this study was to examine the context specific features that signify the role of a local disability organization in Indonesia as an empowering setting. The analyses led to the identification of three main empowering functions of the setting, as presented in Table 1. These functions are manifested in specific enabling mechanisms that have led to a series of empowered outcomes in relation to members' personal, political, and social identities.

Being a mindset changer: Disability is not a personal inferiority

In Indonesia, denigrating views of disabilities remain normalized and this can lead to psychological consequences,

TABLE 1 Findings of the study: The empowering functions of a local disability organization

Empowering functions	Enabling mechanisms	Empowering outcomes
Being a mindset changer	Nurturing inclusive and critical dialogs	Empowered views of self: Disability is not a personal inferiority
Being an alternative resource center	Facilitating capacity building	Resistance to the patronization of PWD: PWD are not passive objects of intervention
Fostering supportive and courageous allies	Developing socially oriented activities	Emancipatory representations of PWD: PWD as contributing community members

such as shame, a sense of inferiority and lack of self-worth. Jalu's experience illustrates this challenge when he shared his failed attempt to invite his neighbor, who also has a disability, to join the IDN:

> Her parents did not allow her to leave her house. Her parents are afraid that if she goes out, neighbors will make fun of her. She used to go out, but neighbors started saying things that made children afraid of her, things like "Look Dewi is coming, aren't you afraid of her?". Dewi is treated as a scary person who makes children frightened (Jalu, male, member).

In a context where participating in community activities is highly valued, this attitude may intensify a sense of otherness. Moreover, when pathologizing and moralistic views on disabilities remain dominant, it is hard for people to problematize such an attitude. Situated in this kind of social context, the IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by acting as a mindset changer and enabling its members to disrupt the internalization of stigmatizing views on disabilities.

The mindset changer function is activated through critical dialogs that are a part of the everyday interactions in the organization. In this setting, critical awareness of disabilities is promoted and maintained through informal conversations, not formal training sessions. This explains the significance of the IDN as a gathering place, as illustrated in the following excerpt from an interview with Ilham, one of the IDN founders:

> It may seem that we're just having a yarn [informal discussion], but we are actually having a talk about the meanings of our lives, how we actually like to live our lives. I might casually ask a friend, "So, what did you get by attending the training program at the rehabilitation centre? What differences did it make to you?" and he might reply with, "I don't know, just killing time, perhaps" … like that … So, then I would ask him, "killing time? Is that what you want to do for the rest of your life? Don't you have any dreams? A purposeful aim?" … like that … When we are having formal meetings, there isn't such talk. Friends don't open up about their thoughts or ideas. But, when we are having a yarn, they just speak up.

Ilham's reflections highlight the significant role of everyday conversations held in the IDN. Everyday conversations have become a vehicle for promoting transformative dialogs through which its members can recognize, question, and eventually change disabling mindsets. The emphasis on the role of informal conversations also reflects the inclusive atmosphere nurtured in this organization. Instead of using formally structured training sessions, which can be intimidating and patronizing, personal testimonies are used to share critical views on disabilities. Through this sharing, the IDN is able to make people from various backgrounds feel welcome and comfortable to participate.

By continuously engaging in such critical dialogs, the members of the IDN are then able to transform their perspectives on disabilities. They realize that the problems associated with disabilities are primarily rooted in the ways people or they themselves view disabilities rather than in the physical or mental conditions experienced by PWD. In other words, the IDN has facilitated its members to have critical awareness of disabilities as socially constructed oppressions, and develop the required socio-psychological strategies to refute the normalized stigmatizing views on disabilities. This awareness is illustrated in the following excerpts from an interview with Luna:

> I believe that to live a life is to bring goodness for others around us. Before joining the IDN, all that I knew was that I was a burden to other people. But now, my mindset has changed. Although I have limitations, I want to be able to help other people around me. I am still in the learning process, but I want to make sure that I can bring goodness for others around me (Luna, female, member).

This reflection indicates the significance of the IDN as a mindset changer. For Luna, participating in the organization has enabled her to invalidate the depiction of PWD as a burden for others. Similar to Luna, other participants highlighted on more than one occasion how their active involvement in the IDN has gradually transformed the way they respond to disabilities. Aacquiring such an awareness is a meaningful form of personal empowerment considering that the depictions of PWD as inferior individuals remain normalized. In this sense, the IDN has played a profound role as a mindset changer by enabling its members to discards the oppressive portrayal of disability as a form of personal inferiority.

Being an alternative resource center: PWD are not passive objects of intervention

The next empowering feature of the IDN is its ability to function as an alternative resource center from which members can garner instrumental and symbolic resources for resisting the institutionalized patronization of PWD. Although some disability organizations in Indonesia have started to advocate critical perspectives on disabilities, the dominance of deficit-oriented perspectives of disability are still limitedly challenged as reflected in public policies and interventions on disabilities (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Suharto et al., 2016). For example, until 2010, some ministerial decrees still assigned PWD under the category of subpopulation with social problems, along with drug addicts, homeless people, beggars, prostitutes, ex-prisoners, juvenile delinquents, and neglected senior citizens. Such a categorization depicts the predominant patronizing approach toward people with disabilities (Adioetomo et al., 2014).

This analysis showed that dealing with patronizing approaches, particularly from government authorities or officers, is also one of the daily challenges experienced by IDN members. This is evident in the following excerpt from an interview with Amir, who shared his experience of attending a government-sponsored training program:

> I was once invited to attend a training program on animal husbandry. I was told that after the training I would be provided with some hens and an egg incubator machine. But when I received the machine, it did not work, and instead of getting some hens, they gave me six roosters. How on earth, would I be able to start a chicken farm with six roosters? That's the point where I started to think that I was just an object for them, an object for training programs (Amir, male, member).

Amir's experience reflects how government authorities might have contributed to institutionalizing the objectification of PWD. In the Indonesian context, where independent disability organizations have developed since the late 1990s, government departments have been the main public institutions shaping the way disability issues are approached through social welfare policies and rehabilitation program for decades (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Yulianto, 2011).

The majority of disability interventions are managed by government institutions. Hence, dealing with government officers at various points of their life has become common for PWD in Indonesia. It is generally difficult for PWD in Indonesia to access alternative sources of instrumental support due to the limited availability of independent organizations that provide such services (Adioetomo et al., 2014). The situation can be more challenging in rural areas where the presence of independent disability organizations is very rare. This has created a socioeconomic pressure for many PWD that has led them be dependent on the social assistance programs provided by the government (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Yulianto, 2011).

Against this background, the findings of this present study suggest that the IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by enabling its members to resist the institutionalized patronization imposed upon them. This function has been enacted by promoting capacity building activities that may create pathways for its members to strive for their economic independence. These activities include organizing training programs that meet the needs and talents of its members, facilitating networking, and developing a wheelchair service center. As illustrated in the following reflection, these activities have enabled the members of the IDN to have access to an alternative source of instrumental support and not be solely dependent on the government's assistance.

> There are many benefits of joining the IDN. First, I have more friends now. Before joining the IDN, my social circle was very limited, but now I am friends with all these people. If I had not joined IDN, I may never have known them. Also, through the wheelchair service centre, I have got a job making pillow seats which gives me additional income (Harto, male, member).

In the Indonesian context, where the majority of PWD still live with unemployment and poverty, Harto's reflection indicates the significance of the IDN as an accessible resource center. Most of the IDN members are self-employed in home-based microbusinesses or work as casual laborers as access to professional jobs is very limited due to the discriminatory working environments. With such a situation, they struggle to have a steady and adequate income. Their income may be sufficient for paying daily expenses, but little can be saved for costs related to health, housing, education, and unforeseen hardship. Because of this, PWD in Indonesia are conditioned to rely on charities to make a living, especially those managed by government institutions. This situation of dependency has perpetuated the patronizing depiction of PWD as helpless individuals (Adioetomo et al., 2014; Suharto et al., 2016).

Accordingly, the ability of the IDN to provide its members with an alternative means of living has been of paramount importance, both literally and symbolically. Currently, not all the IDN members are able to have employment in the organization. However, the ability of the IDN to create full-time jobs for some of its members is symbolically meaningful as it enables the organization to counter the patronizing depiction of PWD as helpless objects of pity. This is echoed in a reflection from Cahyo:

> All of us are working sincerely to revive ourselves. Let's not allow ourselves to become an object of ridicule for government officials. We are here to find ways to revive ourselves: to work out what we can do to resist the demeaning comments from government officials. As *difabel* we are often looked down upon. So, let's not make ourselves dependent on others, no matter what, we should stand on our own feet (Cahyo, male, member).

Fostering supportive and courageous allies: PWD as contributing community members

The emphasis on interdependence between self and others is a part of the defining features of Javanese social ethics (Guinness, 2009; Koentjaraningrat, 1985). As such, active involvement in community activities is highly valued as an indicator of people's willingness to maintain harmonious social connections and their worth as individuals. Therefore, social exclusion may not only marginalize people from their social environment, but also impede them from fully living their cultural ideal of being dignified persons.

Against this socio-cultural background, the IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by creating relational context and collective activities that have enabled its members to defy their normalized invisibility. The participants reported that their involvement in the IDN has allowed them to experience supportive, egalitarian, and destigmatizing relationships, which has then encouraged them to reject their social exclusion and offset the portrayal of PWD as being incapable of making meaningful contributions to their community. This role is evident in Amir's reflection in which he recalled the participation of the IDN in typical Indonesian annual events:

> We have joined the Independence Day carnivals with other groups in the community. Other than the Independence Day carnival, we have also participated in *Takbiran* nights [the annual religious carnival to mark the end of *Ramadhan*, the fasting month for Muslims]. By participating in such events, we are showing our community our existence. We want to promote an understanding that we do exist and we can do activities along with other groups in our community (Amir, male, member).

Besides encouraging its members to participate in community activities and rituals, the role of the IDN in enabling its members to resist the social invalidation of PWD has been possible through collective activities that allow its members to make meaningful contributions to their community. One such example of an activity is the wheelchair service centre. When we asked the participants about what they valued most about being part of the IDN, most of the participants mentioned the activities through which they can support or provide assistance and services for others. They seem to believe that such activities may enable them to promote empowering representations of PWD as capable and contributing community members and to negate the pejorative characterization of PWD as community burdens. This sentiment is evident in the following excerpt of an interview:

> We develop strategies so that people can see us. Gradually they will begin to realize… "Oh, … I see it is a wheelchair service centre" and they will learn that the mechanics are *difabel* persons and then they may say, "Oh, so they *are* capable". They will recognize us as *difabel* people who are capable of running a wheelchair service centre, so when they meet a *difabel* person who is a beggar, they will be able to think that not all *difabel* people are like that. I think that is where our action is (Luna, female, member).

Luna's reflection indicates how their activities in the wheelchair service center have a significance that goes beyond their instrumental function. By creating such activities, the IDN has become a symbolic resource through which its members can amplify empowering representations of PWD. In addition, the participants' accounts indicate that having the opportunities to conduct socially oriented activities is also culturally meaningful as they are consistent with the Javanese view of an ideal way of being. Agus, one of the IDN founders, shared this point when he recalled his motivations for initiating the organization:

> Back then, I already had my own home-based business. I never had interactions with all these friends, because I already felt comfortable in my own little world. Financially speaking, I had good income. But then, there is this teaching that says, "you are at your best when you can be a useful person for other people".

In this reflection, Agus highlighted the moral and cultural ideal that ignited his enthusiasm for establishing the IDN.

DISCUSSION

The research explored the empowering roles of a local disability organization in Indonesia. The findings of this study suggest that the organization has functioned as an empowering setting by fostering relational contexts and collective activities that have enabled its members to develop supportive and courageous allies for advocating more emancipatory representations of PWD. Overall, the findings of the study support previous literature on ECS (e.g., Aber et al., 2011; Maton, 2008; Maton & Salem, 1995; Peterson & Speer, 2000; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004; Zimmerman, 2000), and specifically the Maton and Brodsky (2011) theory that settings may empower members through cognitive/affective, instrumental, and relational processes through which members can access both tangible and symbolic resources.

In addition, this study adds to the literature by identifying empowering processes, which are culture and context-specific. In the context of a local disability organization in Indonesia, the empowering processes include promoting critical views of disabilities, fostering collective resistance against the hegemonic patronizing attitudes toward PWD, and propagating emancipatory identities. These processes have been shaped by and are responsive to the cultural and political contexts of the community being studied where emphases on religious and communal life have significantly influenced the ways disabilities are generally portrayed and experienced. Situated in such a context, the IDN has functioned as an empowering setting by enacting the cultural ideal of being contributing community members, thereby enabling members of the IDN to counter the patronizing construction of PWD as inferior individuals, passive objects of interventions, and burdens to their community.

Promoting critical consciousness in context is one of the core features of ECS that has been widely discussed in the literature on empowering settings (e.g., Balcazar et al., 2012; Christens et al., 2013; Menon & Allen, 2020). In the context of the organization, critical consciousness raising means supporting members to contest the pathologizing and moralistic views of disabilities that have normalized the stigmatization of PWD as inferior individuals. By engaging in critical dialogs nurtured in the setting, members of the IDN gain awareness of the socio-political embeddedness of their oppressive realities and are able to liberate themselves from self-stigmatizing views of disabilities.

Similar to previous studies on ECS (e.g., Balcazar et al., 2012; Maton & Brodsky, 2011; Salusky et al., 2020), this study also found that the ability of a setting to facilitate members' personal and collective development is central to its role as an empowering setting. In the IDN, this instrumental role operates through its function as an alternative resource center from which members can partake in collective activities that develop their social, economic, and political capacities. Development of such capacities has then created pathways for them to resist the patronizing depictions of PWD as passive objects of interventions.

Another key feature of ECS is its ability to develop supportive and meaningful relational experiences from which members can foster solidarity and emancipatory collective identities (e.g., Christens, 2012; Dutt, 2018; Rappaport, 1995). In this study, we found that participation in the IDN has enabled members to forge supportive alliances for the promotion of collective emancipatory identities that reflect both their religious and cultural worldviews. These emancipatory identities are particularly associated with the idea of being able to make valuable contributions to others and the community. In the rural context where the participants live, the Javanese ethics of social care continues to be a significant feature of their community life as it manifests in the normative obligations that require people to take part in various forms of community activities. However, due to the stigmatization that they experienced, the participants were often alienated from such socio-cultural practices. It is through the alliances and socially oriented activities developed in the IDN that they have been able to assert their empowered identities as contributing community members and fulfill their moral and cultural ideals of a dignified life.

Limitations and implications for future research and practice

This study employed data collection and analysis strategies commonly applied in inductive studies to ensure the credibility of its findings. However, the inductive approach of this study also has limitations. Informed by constructivist methodology, we are aware that the research participants, as well as our positioning and interpretations, might have shaped the nature of our findings. Therefore, we acknowledge the possibilities that others may generate different interpretations of the issue and context being studied. Thus, further studies that employ different theoretical or methodological lenses may generate different understandings on the nature of disability organizations as empowering settings. This is a unique study in this setting and our findings lay out preliminary conceptual insights that can inform future studies for examining a hypothetical model about the empowering functions of disability organizations.

Second, by focusing on the strengths of this local disability organization as an empowering setting, this study might have overlooked any critiques and potential challenges that may be impeding its development. Such a risk may also be doubled by the potential of insider bias, both from the participants in their evaluations of the organization and the first author, given her status as an insider in the cultural context where the study was conducted.

Lastly, despite our conscientious attempts to conduct a study that guided by the values of equality and collaborations, the research team clearly held more control in developing the course of the study than the participants. We recognized the various positionalities that afford researchers power in the context of research despite our efforts to mitigate these effects through ongoing and open communications with participants.

In light of these limitations, future research on similar settings may be benefit from the use of longitudinal approaches to the studies as these may enable researchers to more rigorously identify the extent to which empowering functions and outcomes found in such settings can persist over time and what factors influence their sustainability.

According to the 2020 data reported by the statistical bureau of Yogyakarta province, there were 1824 PWD in the area where the IDN is located ("Informasi Kependudukan D.I. Yogyakarta," n.d.). This data suggests a limitation of the IDN in its ability to make substantive impacts in the area considering they only have 25 active members. This limitation points to the need for further studies that explore how disability organizations like the IDN can extend their empowering roles and impacts to the wider community. Also, although this study has confirmed some common features of ECS (e.g., the presence of an empowering relational environment), some other aspects have not been adequately explored, such as the role of group leadership. This is a possible avenue for future studies including how relevant theoretical models on ECS developed in different cultural contexts can be adapted to Indonesia.

This study found that resisting the stigmatization and patronization of PWD was an important pathway toward both personal and collective empowerment of the participants. Fostering empowering representations of PWD as competent and contributing community members was crucial part of this resistance, as these representations had both political and cultural significance. This finding supports previous analyses on disability policies and regulations in Indonesia (e.g., Adioetomo et al., 2014), which have highlighted the lingering domination of pathologizing frameworks in the Indonesian disability interventions. Informed by these analyses, this study provides qualitative data which supports the need for advocating the mainstreaming of more empowering disability policies and regulations.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has explicated the transformative features of a local disability organization in Indonesia. While the findings are consistent with the much existing discussions on the concept of empowering settings, our study presented more culture and context-specific characteristics which reflect the particular issues and challenges of advocating disability activism in a rural Indonesian context.

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