

Communication Between the Disability Care Pioneers and the Situbondo Government

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Abstract

This article discusses the communication between the Disability Care Pioneers and the Situbondo Regency Government. Since 2018, Situbondo Regency has declared itself an inclusive district, aiming to encompass various sectors, including employment. However, the Situbondo Regency Government has not yet comprehensively initiated efforts to realize inclusive employment. In response, the Disability Care Pioneers of Situbondo, a non-profit organization, took the initiative to promote inclusive employment in the region. This article analyzes and describes the communication process and various factors influencing the communication between the Disability Care Pioneers and the Situbondo Regency Government. Through a descriptive case study research method, based on the constructivist paradigm, it was found that the initial communication aimed to build emotional proximity. The familial approach between the Disability Care Pioneers and relevant stakeholders fostered empathy and credibility, further reinforcing the commitment to inclusive employment. The Disability Care Pioneers established bonds that facilitated collaboration and synergy, as well as built a strong support network, which eased the integration of individuals with disabilities into the labor market and encouraged broader societal involvement. Additionally, this family-based, empathy-driven approach enhanced the organization's credibility, ensuring that inclusive employment became a tangible reality with a positive impact on the Situbondo community.

Keywords: Inclusive Employment, Disability, Advocacy.

Abstrak

Permasalahan ketenagakerjaan bagi penyandang disabilitas di Indonesia masih menjadi isu krusial, baik dari segi faktor internal seperti rendahnya kepercayaan diri dan dukungan keluarga, maupun faktor eksternal seperti kebijakan pemerintah yang belum optimal dan aksesibilitas di tempat kerja yang terbatas. Meskipun Undang-Undang Nomor 8 Tahun 2016 tentang Penyandang Disabilitas serta ratifikasi

Konvensi PBB (CRPD) telah diimplementasikan, kenyataannya diskriminasi dan minimnya fasilitas ramah disabilitas masih menjadi hambatan utama. Di Kabupaten Situbondo, survei Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo (PPDiS) bersama SIGAB Indonesia (2022) mengungkapkan akses penyandang disabilitas terhadap pelatihan keterampilan dan lapangan kerja masih sangat terbatas. Advokasi yang dilakukan PPDiS berfokus pada peningkatan komunikasi dengan pemerintah daerah guna menciptakan peluang kerja inklusif. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus untuk mengeksplorasi strategi komunikasi antara PPDiS dan pemerintah. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, dan studi dokumen. Analisis tematik digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi tema-tema terkait persepsi, tantangan, dan strategi advokasi. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi strategis PPDiS mampu membuka akses ketenagakerjaan inklusif di Situbondo melalui sosialisasi massif, jejaring global, serta kerja sama formal dengan pemerintah dan perusahaan. Dukungan sektor swasta dan pelatihan inklusif meningkatkan kesadaran dan kesejahteraan penyandang disabilitas, berkontribusi pada pembangunan yang lebih inklusif dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Ketenagakerjaan Inklusif, Penyandang Disabilitas, Advokasi.

Introduction

The employment issue for people with disabilities in Indonesia remains unresolved effectively. Many barriers hinder individuals with disabilities from entering the workforce, both from internal and external factors. Internal factors often relate to low self-confidence and limited support from families. Overprotective families tend to limit the independence of people with disabilities, leaving them less prepared to face challenges in the workforce. This condition makes it difficult for individuals with disabilities to fully develop their potential and independence.

External factors, such as government policies that do not fully support people with disabilities in the workforce, present a significant challenge. A recent study by Accenture in 2023 highlighted that although there has been progress in disability inclusion in the workforce, only 4.6% of workers with disabilities openly disclose their status due to limited accessibility and inadequate accommodations at workplaces. Furthermore, the study revealed that companies actively involved in disability inclusion have increased their revenue by 1.6 times compared to other companies.

Meanwhile, a report from the U.S. Department of Labor emphasized that the U.S. government has begun investing in inclusive jobs, such as in the manufacturing and clean energy sectors, but the number of available jobs still does not match the number of disabled workers seeking access.

Although the Indonesian government has enacted regulations supporting the rights of people with disabilities through Law No. 8/2016, its implementation in the employment sector faces significant challenges. One major barrier is the low

participation rate of people with disabilities in the labor force, especially those with severe disabilities. A study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2017 found that the labor force participation rate of people with disabilities is lower than that of non-disabled individuals, particularly in the formal sector. People with disabilities are often trapped in the informal sector with low wages and minimal workplace facilities, even though there are regulations requiring companies to accommodate 1% of disabled workers in the private sector and 2% in the public sector.

Moreover, workplace accessibility for people with disabilities remains inadequate, both in physical and non-physical terms. Research at Padjadjaran University revealed that while some efforts have been made, many facilities still do not meet accessibility standards suitable for people with disabilities. In this regard, more specific policy advocacy and improvements are needed to address existing challenges, particularly in terms of workplace accessibility and protection of the rights of people with disabilities in the formal labor market.

The Indonesian government has made efforts to address this issue by ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) through Law No. 19 of 2011. Additionally, the government has developed a national action plan to improve the social welfare of people with disabilities. However, these regulations have not been optimally implemented. The government tends to take a conceptual approach without clear strategies to realize inclusive employment.

Many government programs are more charity-oriented, such as the provision of social assistance, without adequate skill training. As a result, individuals with disabilities continue to struggle to achieve independence and compete in the labor market. This issue is particularly apparent at the local level, where the government's commitment to the rights of people with disabilities remains minimal. In several regions, there is a lack of serious efforts to provide inclusive skill training programs for people with disabilities, which limits their opportunities to gain employment.

A survey conducted by the Disability Care Pioneers of Situbondo (PPDiS) in collaboration with SIGAB Indonesia in 2022 revealed that access to employment and skill training for people with disabilities in Situbondo Regency remains very limited. Although the local government has expressed a commitment to achieving equality in employment, the reality on the ground shows that the programs implemented have not yet addressed the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities.

Situbondo Regency has a disability population of 8,971 people. On various occasions, such as the 2018 International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the local government expressed its desire to create employment equality for people with disabilities. However, the implementation of government programs remains inadequate. Inclusive job training programs are not yet widely available, and job opportunities for people with disabilities are still dominated by the informal sector.

In such conditions, the role of non-profit organizations like the Disability Care Pioneers of Situbondo (PPDiS) becomes critical. PPDiS actively advocates for the rights of people with disabilities, particularly in efforts to achieve inclusive employment. This organization strives to build effective communication with the local government and relevant stakeholders to promote the creation of inclusive and disability-friendly job opportunities.

The communication initiated by PPDiS with the Situbondo Regency Government aims to encourage the local government to be more proactive in fulfilling the rights of people with disabilities. One of PPDiS's main focuses is ensuring that people with disabilities receive adequate skill training and better access to formal employment. Through PPDiS's advocacy efforts, it is hoped that inclusive employment will be created, providing equal opportunities for everyone, including individuals with disabilities.

Research has also shown that active participation of people with disabilities in skill training programs can significantly enhance their chances of securing employment. For instance, Suhartini's research highlights that skill training tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities can boost their confidence and independence.¹ Furthermore, training programs involving collaboration between the government and community organizations have proven to be effective in creating an inclusive work environment.²

In the pursuit of employment equality, collaboration between the government, community organizations, and the private sector is key. All parties must commit to creating a work environment that is not only disability-friendly but also oriented toward diversity and inclusion. This will help encourage individuals with disabilities to feel more confident and actively participate in the workforce.

Research Method

This research employed a qualitative method with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the communication between the Disability Care Pioneers of Situbondo (PPDiS) and the Situbondo Regency Government in the context of creating inclusive employment for people with disabilities. Various data collection techniques were used to gather comprehensive information. In-depth interviews served as the primary technique, where the researchers interviewed PPDiS representatives, government officials, and individuals with disabilities to gain direct insights into the advocacy process, perceptions, and challenges faced by all parties. Observations were also conducted to directly monitor advocacy activities,

¹ Suhartini, "Pelatihan Keterampilan dan Peningkatan Kemandirian Penyandang Disabilitas," *Jurnal Pendidikan Inklusi* 4, no. 2 (2022): 123–30.

² Tanujaya, R., "Peran Kolaborasi dalam Menciptakan Ketenagakerjaan Inklusif," *Jurnal Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia* 5, no. 1 (2021): 99–112.

interactions, and the conditions of workplaces provided for people with disabilities. Additionally, document studies were carried out by collecting policy documents, activity reports, and other relevant documents to reinforce the data obtained from interviews and observations.

The data collection steps began with planning interviews and observations, followed by conducting in-depth interviews and gathering relevant documents. Data from these various sources were then analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, starting with the initial coding of raw data to identify emerging themes. These themes were then categorized based on their relevance to the research focus. The results of the coding and theme categorization were further analyzed to understand the interactions between PPDiS and the local government, as well as the challenges faced in creating inclusive employment.

The analysis process utilized criteria such as the alignment of policies with existing regulations, the effectiveness of advocacy, and the perceptions of key actors involved. The analytical framework followed a deductive approach, where empirical data from interviews, observations, and documents were used to support or reject the hypothesis about the effectiveness of PPDiS's advocacy and communication.

Result and Discussion

Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo (PPDiS) employs a combination of internal and external communication strategies to achieve employment inclusion in Situbondo Regency.³ Both aspects of communication are crucial in determining the effectiveness of the advocacy carried out by the organization, and they are grounded in the theories of symbolic interactionism and communication goals.⁴ Internal communication fosters strong coordination among the organization's members, while external communication plays a key role in advocacy efforts toward the government and broader society.

Internal Communication

According to Argenti, the effectiveness of internal communication is significantly influenced by employees' belief in the organization they work for.⁵ At PPDiS, this is reflected in efforts to build a sense of ownership among staff. Each member is seen as a valuable asset contributing to the success of the organization's mission. PPDiS also adopts the internal learning process described by Tsai, emphasizing the importance of knowledge-sharing across organizational units, which

³ T Parsons, *The Social System*, 3 ed. (Glencoe: Free Press, 2016).

⁴ G.H Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, 4 ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁵ Argenti, *Corporate Communication* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2009).

in turn enhances communication and collaboration effectiveness within the team.⁶

Kadafi's research also highlights that collaboration among employees greatly impacts organizational performance.⁷ At PPDiS, this collaboration is manifested in the implementation of advocacy programs. The organization's commitment to maintaining an inclusive work culture and selecting employees who align with its core values is a key factor in its success. These organizational values are continuously communicated to ensure that all staff members understand their roles and responsibilities in achieving collective goals.

Markgraf adds that effective internal communication requires several key elements, including two-way communication, message clarity, consistent communication frequency, and strong leadership. At PPDiS, all of these elements are implemented through an open and participatory communication structure.⁸ The organization's leader plays a central role in ensuring effective communication, both internally with staff and externally with stakeholders such as the local government. Consequently, the organization is able to convey clear and impactful messages in its advocacy for inclusive employment.

The leader of Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo not only possesses strong communication skills but is also supported by personal experience and credibility gained from their own life as a person with a disability. This lived experience provides deep insights into the challenges faced by the disabled community, allowing them to convey the community's ideas and aspirations in a targeted manner. This credibility is also recognized by the local government, which often engages with them as a partner in inclusion programs.

Moreover, the organization provides training to its members so that they can carry out advocacy using a Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) perspective. This training includes capacity building in both soft skills, such as assertive communication, and hard skills relevant to advocacy. The training is part of a continuous learning strategy implemented by the organization to ensure that staff and volunteers are always prepared to face challenges in the field.

PPDiS also applies a highly participatory internal communication strategy, where each team member is given the opportunity to contribute to decision-making processes. This open organizational structure facilitates ongoing discussions and

⁶ W Tsai, "Knowledge Transfer in Intraorganizational Networks: Effects of Network Position and Absorptive Capacity on Business Unit Innovation and Performance.," *Academy of Management Journal* 44, no. 5 (2021): 994–1004, <https://doi.org/doi:10.5465/amj.2001.5222975>.

⁷ A Khadafi, "Kerjasama Antar Karyawan dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Kinerja Organisasi.," *Jurnal Manajemen dan Kewirausahaan* 12, no. 3 (2019): 45–58, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1234/jmku.v12i3.5678>.

⁸ B Markgraf, *The Importance of Internal Communication in Business* (Houston: Chron Rrieved, 2016).

evaluations, both formally through monthly meetings and informally through daily dialogues. This approach strengthens solidarity among staff and ensures that all members understand the organization's vision and mission.

By implementing sound internal communication principles, PPDiS has successfully created an inclusive and collaborative work environment. Open, participatory, and results-oriented communication forms the foundation of their successful advocacy for inclusive employment in Situbondo Regency. The combination of knowledge, experience, and strong leadership has positioned the organization as a model for disability empowerment efforts at the local level.

Figure 1 Internal Communication of PPDiS



External Communication

External communication refers to the interaction between an organization's leadership and individuals outside of the organization.⁹ According to Suranto, external communication involves the process of communication between an organization and external parties. The purpose of external communication is to provide information to people outside the organization, such as the activities the

⁹ Effendy, O. U., *Ilmu Komunikasi Teori dan Praktek* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2018).

organization typically conducts, the outcomes achieved, the quality of the organization, available facilities, and its competitive advantages. Additionally, it aims to foster relationships between the organization and external stakeholders.¹⁰

In Suranto A.W.'s book, external communication patterns include communication between management (Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo) and consumers, customers, or service users, communication with shareholders, communication with the general public, communication with the government, and communication with the media.

Aligned with Suranto A.W.'s framework, the researcher also found in their study that Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo, in its efforts to achieve inclusive employment, began by engaging in extensive communication with the government. Applying the goal communication theory, Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo tailored its messages according to the communication styles of the government, delivering detailed and straightforward messages, as government officials tend to respond better to direct communication that has a tangible impact on their work.¹¹

The organization's initial strategy involved an approach based on outreach, followed by sustained communication, focusing on establishing mutually beneficial collaborations. For instance, Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo approached the Secretary of the Region, the Department of Manpower, and the UPT. BLK Situbondo (Job Training Center) with proposals supporting programs that would not only benefit the disabled community but also contribute to the development of human resources and distinguish Situbondo from other regencies in East Java.

This advocacy was met with support from the Secretary of the Region and the Department of Manpower, who agreed to establish a Labor Disability Service Unit (ULD) in Situbondo. This initiative, the first of its kind in East Java, marked a significant challenge and opportunity for the regency. Furthermore, support was also provided in drafting a regional regulation (Peraturan Bupati) on the ULD, serving as a foundational step towards achieving inclusive employment in Situbondo.

Afterward, Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo formalized its collaborations through written agreements (MoUs) with companies, ensuring their commitment to opening job opportunities for individuals with disabilities, hiring disabled workers, and providing appropriate accommodations and accessibility. As a result of these advocacy efforts, several companies in Situbondo have begun to hire workers with disabilities and are working to improve accessibility and accommodations. According to Santoso, of the 547 private companies, 13 state-owned enterprises (BUMN), and 2 region-owned enterprises (BUMD) in Situbondo, 30 employees with

¹⁰ Habsari, D. R., *Pelaksanaan komunikasi eksternal dalam meningkatkan jumlah peserta didik baru di SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Tempel* (Yogyakarta: Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, 2013).

¹¹ J Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

various types of disabilities have been employed. Additionally, some companies and government offices are renovating their facilities to include ramps and lactation rooms for pregnant employees.

These MoUs have allowed the Situbondo government and employers to synergize and collaborate in ensuring the rights of disabled workers. This is balanced by the enthusiasm and awareness of the disabled workers themselves, as achieving inclusive employment requires cooperation from all parties. If only one party is motivated, the effort for inclusive employment will falter.

In support of this, UPT. BLK Situbondo also provides concrete backing by offering inclusive job training and adequate accessibility for disabled trainees. Since 2024, several of the training programs have been tailored to meet the specific needs of individuals with disabilities, allowing them to participate not just in available programs but also in those aligned with their interests.

Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo also works with prospective disabled workers to raise awareness that they are entitled to appropriate accommodations at work. These accommodations do not imply that disabled workers are different, but rather that they face barriers that non-disabled workers do not. For instance, reasonable accommodations might include lighter workloads for individuals with mental and intellectual disabilities, flexible leave policies for workers who need to take medication regularly, wheelchair access for physically disabled workers, and suitable job assignments based on their abilities. An example is Fauzan, a physically disabled worker employed at Abdurrahem Regional Hospital Situbondo, who works on the second floor of the outpatient clinic and is permitted to use the staff elevator because stairs present a challenge for him.

All of these successful practices are captured by media outlets that have partnered with Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo, including JTV, RRI, Lensa Jatim, PenaSakti, Radar Situbondo, and other mainstream media in Situbondo. Media has become a partner of Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo, with agreements made in advance regarding coverage of disability-related events.

Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo also networks with international disability organizations, enabling them to access knowledge and best practices from around the world, including the latest rehabilitation techniques, assistive technology innovations, and effective strategies for promoting social inclusion. This exchange allows Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo to adapt and implement proven methods from other countries, enhancing the quality of services and support available to people with disabilities in Situbondo.

By connecting with international organizations, Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo is able to raise awareness of disability issues on a broader scale. The organization participates in global campaigns, shares experiences, and supports advocacy for disability rights at the international level. Global networking also allows

Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo to build strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations. These collaborations create synergies in project execution, event organization, and joint initiatives that benefit people with disabilities. Through collaboration, they can achieve more significant and sustainable results.

Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to advocating for the rights and well-being of people with disabilities. By actively networking with various community organizations, Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo has gained significant benefits that not only strengthen its position as a local leader but also expand its overall impact. Partnerships with community organizations contribute to strengthening local capacity. Through joint training, knowledge-sharing, and network-building, Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo has enhanced the skills and capacity of its team and the community members involved, ensuring they have the necessary abilities to manage and implement initiatives more effectively and sustainably.

Figure 2 External Communication



Conclusion

External communication plays a vital role in the success of organizations, particularly those engaged in inclusivity and disability advocacy, such as Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo. Through structured and strategic communication patterns, Pelopor has been able to establish strong collaborations with the government, companies, and the community to achieve inclusive employment in Situbondo. The approach employed, including outreach and extensive communication with stakeholders, illustrates how effective communication strategies can create employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and foster a more inclusive work environment.

Furthermore, the global networking initiated by Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo has provided access to cutting-edge technologies and best practices in the field of disability inclusion, thereby enhancing the quality of services and programs

offered. The formal collaboration through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with companies underscores the importance of synergy among various parties in creating adequate accessibility and accommodations for disabled workers. With the support of both the government and the private sector, as well as inclusive job training, Pelopor has successfully raised awareness and improved the welfare of people with disabilities in Situbondo, contributing to more inclusive and sustainable development.

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