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Towards Equality: Radio Braille Surabaya's Communication Strategy in Promoting Disability Awareness

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Abstract

Promoting inclusivity requires the vital aspect of ensuring equality for people with disabilities in information dissemination. As one of the mass media, the radio community contributes to knowledge and information dissemination to promote equality. Radio Braille Surabaya is a radio community providing a forum for information exchange. It aims to empower a source of knowledge to promote inclusivity, equality, and disability awareness in urban society. Therefore, this study investigates the strategies of content production of Radio Braille Surabaya to promote equality and inclusivity for disabled people, especially people with visual impairments. This study applied a qualitative approach with a case study as the framework. The data was collected through in-depth interviews with purposive samplings. The interviews were conducted with three key informants who manage and organize Radio Braille Surabaya. The result shows that the strategies include collaborative content planning, underlining the public infrastructure for disabled people, and emphasizing audio-rich content production and storytelling. This study underscores the importance of the radio community as a tool for empowering marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, by providing equal information dissemination through accessible content.

Keywords: *Disability Empowerment, Inclusive Society, Radio Community, Radio Surabaya*

INTRODUCTION

In mass media, radio has long been recognized as a powerful tool for disseminating information, facilitating dialogue, and promoting social inclusion. It has been a challenge for the radio industry to create an egalitarian platform for everyone to promote their concern (Tsarwe, 2020). Mass media can be vital in raising awareness and understanding of disability issues. By presenting accurate and balanced portrayals of persons with disabilities, the media can help dispel negative stereotypes and promote the rights and dignity of these individuals. The potential of radio



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production training and participation in voice and empowerment is explored by studying their narratives to promote inclusivity (Prahmana et al., 2021).

Community radio considers people as active participants and is "committed to human rights, social justice, environment, and sustainable approaches to development" (Fuller, 2007). It is motivated by social goals rather than profit ones, which aims to expose hidden communities. Radio is essential in empowering communities because it is a knowledge resource that informs and energizes newly aware people (Rimmer, 2021). Radio can display empowering traits by providing inclusivity-related information; it can also do so through other elements like chat shows, phone-ins, and debate programs that allow listeners a voice and help democratize and grow society.

Community radio's primary function is to offer a wide range of services that address community needs in a way that other sectors do not through their dedication to local programming (Watson, 2022). Community radio has an established track record worldwide as a tool for community-led development and social change, in addition to serving the community's needs through access and participation, volunteerism, diversity, independence, and localism (Midões, 2021). Therefore, mutual development, which aligns with the ideals and practices of community development, is the primary focus of progressive community media practice. A community broadcaster must have content connected to local reality and address the issues, commemoration, needs, desires, and cultures of that same community.

Disability and media studies carve out a distinct field of inquiry by drawing upon the established traditions of media, cultural, and disability studies (Amoako et al., 2020). Mass media can shape public opinion on a wide range of topics, not the least of which is how people feel about disabilities (Henry et al., 2023). According to statistical data, the number of individuals with disabilities in Indonesia has been rising annually. The data statistics from the Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs indicate that 11,580,117 individuals in Indonesia were reported to have a disability in 2010 (ILO, 2018). These individuals included 3,474,035 with a vision disability, 3,010,830 with a physical disability, 2,547,626 with a hearing disability, and 1,389,614 with a mental disability.

In the environments in Indonesia, people with disabilities find themselves often fail to support the realization of their full potential. Consequently, society is often blamed as an external cause of an individual's disability (Zalfaa et al., 2021). While these accusations may not be entirely unfounded, they represent one of the efforts by groups of people with disabilities to shift the general perception of the cause of disability from an individual-centered approach to a social one. The recent expansion of Surabaya's urban planning has prioritized the development of physical infrastructure, including the construction of parks, bicycle lanes, walkways, and other public

amenities (Purnomo et al., 2021). However, effective communication strategies for promoting these initiatives appear to be lacking.

Community radio is a broadcasting type acknowledged by Indonesia's broadcasting infrastructure. Indonesian Community Radio's mission is to offer services that address community needs in a way other sectors do not through their dedication to local programming (Ummah, 2021). Recognizing the importance of equal opportunity and participation, the Indonesian government has proactively established a comprehensive framework of protective laws and regulations (Noviyanti & Hadi, 2022). Following the legalization of broadcasting under Law Number 32 of 2002, community radio proliferated. Community radio institutions are broadcasting institutions that take the form of Indonesian legal entities, according to Article 21 Paragraph 1 of the broadcasting law. A specific community established it, was independent and non-commercial, had a small coverage area, and was formed to satisfy the community's needs. The law led to the emergence of a wide range of community radio stations that capture the diversity of Indonesian society and the requirements of local communities for media to obtain knowledge, information, and enjoyment.

Rimmer's study explores the potential of community radio as a tool for empowerment, particularly for women in South Africa (Rimmer, 2021). Her study interviewed twelve volunteers on the community radio and focused on the issue of women's empowerment. Ahsan and Khatun's study finds that community radio significantly minimizes cyclone-induced economic loss by providing understandable forecasts and advice during emergencies (Ahsan & Khatun, 2020). Their study employed a mixed method to gather all data and focused on how to make proper preparations for cyclone risks for people.

From the case In Indonesia, Mubaroq and Qur'aini's study highlights the importance of community radio in meeting the unique information needs of local communities that are not fulfilled by mainstream media, especially in Indonesia (Mubaroq & Qur'aini, 2023). Irianto's study explores the role of community radio in empowering medium, small, and micro enterprises (MSMEs) in rural Indonesia (Irianto et al., 2019). It emphasizes the importance of community radio in bridging communication gaps and facilitating dialogue among stakeholders in rural communities. The study uses a qualitative approach to the Ngawi Regency in East Java. Dwiana's study on community radio in Indonesia also examines the establishment of community radio as a remote learning medium in Sumba Island, Indonesia, to address the digital divide and provide educational services during the COVID-19 pandemic (Dwiana, 2022). Her study applied a qualitative method and focused on the digital divide in eastern Indonesia.

Reviewing previous community radio studies reveals a thematic similarity with our study. Notably, this convergence is evident in the methodological preference for qualitative approaches, which are prevalent in the existing literature. Additionally, a shared focus on the role of digital media in fostering community engagement and audience reach is apparent across the previous studies. However, despite the range of studies on community radio in addressing social issues, there is a significant gap in our study of the role of radio communities in building inclusivity for people with disabilities, notably the visually impaired.

Community radio has long been recognized as a powerful tool for empowering marginalized groups by providing a platform for self-representation and fostering social change (Heywood, 2020). However, scholarly research has primarily overlooked its specific influence within radio communities organized by and for people with disabilities. This is particularly surprising considering the unique potential of radio as an auditory medium. Unlike traditional media, which often rely on visual components, community radio transcends these barriers, making it an ideal platform for reaching a diverse audience, including those with visual impairments (Order et al., 2021). This lack of attention presents a significant gap in our understanding of how community radio can promote disability awareness and empower individuals with disabilities to have their voices heard.

Community radio offers many benefits for people with physical disabilities. It gives them a voice to share their stories and challenges, fight stereotypes, and advocate for change (Maye et al., 2020). A few crucial elements are: (1) accessibility, because community radio focuses on local issues and audio, it provides content that may be difficult for someone to obtain through mainstream media. (2) Representation: Individuals with disabilities can fight discrimination by using community radio to voice their perspectives. (3) Empowerment: Being involved in radio fosters self-confidence and the development of communication abilities. (4) Awareness: Disability concerns, such as accessibility and support services, can be brought to the public's attention through community radio. (5) Community building: Radio stations can be a platform for people with disabilities to connect and share their experiences.

This study investigates the compelling narrative of a radio community in Surabaya, Indonesia, where individuals with disabilities, primarily those who are visually impaired, play a pivotal role in broadcasting and programming. The radio community is called “Radio Braille Surabaya”. This radio community serves as a platform for information sharing and an empowering knowledge resource to raise awareness and foster inclusivity in urban society. Furthermore, the establishment of alternative, inclusive media was driven by the limited space available in mainstream media to advocate for disability rights. Our research aims to fill this gap by looking

into the specific context of a radio community in Surabaya, Indonesia, where most members are people with disabilities, primarily those with visual impairments. Therefore, the research question encompasses the critical components of the authors' strategy of RBS to produce content toward equality.

METHOD

This research applied a qualitative approach, using a case study as the framework. According to Neuman, Case-study research closely examines one or a few cases, concentrating on numerous specifics within each case and the setting (Neuman, 2014). Case studies let us connect the macro level, which refers to elaborate systems and procedures, with the micro level, or the behaviors of specific individuals. The case study's reasoning aims to illustrate a causal relationship between broad societal forces and the outcomes they have in specific contexts. In this study's context, a case study was used to seek an understanding of how the radio community played a vital role in raising inclusivity in knowledge dissemination.

In-depth interviews were a pivotal methodological choice in collecting data for this study (Neuman, 2014). These interviews enable us to navigate the intricate landscape of the radio community's operations and delve into the multifaceted nature of inclusivity. By engaging directly with community members, including those with disabilities, the authors can capture their unique perspectives, experiences, and motivations. The authors conducted in-depth interviews, and the interviewees were chosen by purposive sampling. Purposive sampling refers to the deliberate participant selection based on the subject's characteristics (Etikan, 2016). This nonrandom technique does not require underlying theories or a predetermined number of participants.

The interviewees included the head of the Institute for the Empowerment of the Blind (known as *Lembaga Pemberdayaan Tunanetra* or LPT in Indonesia), a representative from the Alliance of Independent Journalists or *Aliansi Jurnalis Independent* (AJI) in Surabaya, and the Editor-in-Chief of RBS. They were selected as the initiators and primary organizers of RBS. The head of LPT was chosen because The AJI representative conducted all journalism workshops for RBS members, providing specialized training for blind and visually impaired individuals. The Editor-in-Chief of RBS, who is visually impaired, was selected as an interviewee because he not only represented the disability community but also held the position of Editor-in-Chief at RBS.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Radio Braille Surabaya (RBS) was founded by teachers actively engaged with the Institute for the Empowerment of the Blind (*Lembaga Pemberdayaan Tunanetra* or LPT) with core

programs in education, research, and advocacy. LPT has operated since 2003 with three core programs: education, research, and advocacy. RBS is actively developing content on YouTube to raise awareness about disabilities awareness. Despite being named RBS Radio, it strives to keep up with technological advancements, as audiences now prefer video-based content. RBS employs radio terminology instead of YouTube channels because the blind community is more accustomed to radio. However, RBS prioritizes the audio aspect to ensure accessibility for visually impaired individuals. Despite massive users, YouTube is significantly less researched than Facebook and Twitter, even though it has 2 billion monthly active users (Chen et al., 2023). This approach also extends inclusivity to a broader audience of YouTube users with disabilities.

Unlike traditional media, which often focuses on the uncomplicated transmission of information, YouTube is ideally suited for content creation beyond simply disseminating knowledge (Cunningham & Craig, 2019). As a result, it offers a helpful case study to understand online knowledge producers who actively create various knowledge types (Dubovi & Tabak, 2020). On the other hand, YouTube provides a platform that ranges from scientific knowledge found in textbooks to public opinions based on personal experiences. This creates a lively space for exploring ideas, answering the curiosity of how knowledge is traditionally shared, and making information from all fields accessible.

"While RBS strives to keep pace with technological advancements, as people are increasingly drawn toward video content, our primary focus remains on the auditory aspect to ensure accessibility for our visually impaired friends. At first, radio was believed to be a suitable medium for reaching our blind audience because they were more accustomed to it. On the other hand, we aim to engage many YouTube users with disabilities. Our content not only sheds light on the challenges faced by people with disabilities but also attempts to emphasize the positive aspects."

Interview with AJI representative

The response from the editor-in-chief of RBS explains the utilization of YouTube to increase the inclusivity for all users. YouTube is an ideal platform for knowledge dissemination among blind and visually impaired individuals, promoting inclusivity in video production and raising awareness of their existence and needs. Audio-based content, closed captioning, and transcripts are features to ensure accessibility. With a vast repository of diverse content and global reach, YouTube offers educational resources and advocacy opportunities.

"The emphasis on auditory aspects is evident in the difference between a televised and a radio broadcast of, for example, a football match. The commentator does not need to provide detailed descriptions on television since the visual element is already present. However, on radio, the narration is more comprehensive and detailed due to the absence of visual cues. This is why we strive to make our content accessible to blind listeners."

Interview with the head of LPT

Furthermore, RBS acknowledges the inherent challenge of conveying information solely through audio. While some argue that abstract concepts can be more readily grasped through aural descriptions, RBS recognizes that this approach has limitations. They seek strategies to communicate information through this audio-only medium to address this effectively. One approach they are exploring is facilitating access to YouTube for the visually impaired community (Henry et al., 2023). By providing resources and training on utilizing screen reader software and accessible functionalities on YouTube, RBS hopes to offer an additional platform for information dissemination that caters to different learning styles and preferences within the blind community. This multi-pronged approach demonstrates RBS's commitment to not only raising disability awareness but also ensuring that its message is accessible and resonates with a broader audience.

The journalistic content produced by RBS does not solely emphasize the challenges of disability but also attempts to showcase the positive aspects. Their editorial focus instead strives to showcase the positive aspects of the disability experience, celebrating achievements and fostering a sense of empowerment within their audience. This approach recognizes that mainstream media often fails to adequately represent the disability rights movement and its message to the broader community. The establishment of alternative and inclusive media was motivated by the limited representation of disability rights in mainstream media, especially in reaching the broader community.

The journalistic content produced by RBS extends beyond highlighting the challenges faced by people with disabilities. Their editorial focus instead strives to showcase the positive aspects of the disability experience, celebrating achievements and fostering a sense of empowerment within their audience. This approach recognizes that mainstream media often fails to adequately represent the disability rights movement and its message to the broader community (Amoako et al., 2020). Creating alternative and inclusive media platforms like RBS can amplify these stories of resilience and accomplishment, fostering a more nuanced understanding of disability within the public consciousness.

"We conduct a weekly meeting to discuss the content production process. People from AJI (*Aliansi Jurnalis Independen/Alliance of Independent Journalists*) also conduct training on the same day. The topic is diverse; they teach the visually impaired volunteer to gather data, to write a good narrative, decide the trend, and make the voiceover."

Interview with RBS Editor-in-Chief

Unlike traditional media that rely heavily on visuals, RBS understands the limitations of audio-only content. Recognizing the limitations of this format, their program creators gather weekly to meticulously produce content that prioritizes narrative, voiceovers, and the power of storytelling. Focusing on detailed narratives allows visually impaired listeners to construct mental images and engage more deeply with the presented information. This process goes beyond simply relaying information (Amoako et al., 2020). Skilled producers weave narratives that are rich in detail, creating a soundscape that allows visually impaired listeners to construct vivid mental images.

To explain the strategies, as drawn in Figure 1, RBS starts with a weekly discussion with AJI to have a brainstorming session on a trend, issues, or concerns in the urban community. Then, they construct the objective to decide what content they will produce. After deciding on the content, they make a storyline and build a production team. After the production process, they organize the storyline and proceed to the editing process. The content produced by RBS encompasses a wide range of categories, including investigative reports, educational materials, and creative expressions specifically tailored to resonate with the blind community. This commitment to accessible and engaging storytelling ensures that RBS listeners remain informed, empowered, and connected.

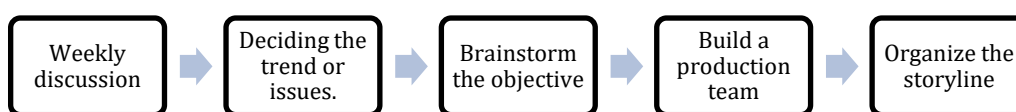


Figure 1. RBS's Strategy in Content Production

RBS takes its commitment to disability awareness further by investigating the accessibility of public facilities in Surabaya. A key area of focus is the iconic public transportation system, the Suroboyo bus (Purnomo et al., 2021). Through investigative journalism and community reports, RBS probes whether these facilities are genuinely accessible to all community members, highlighting any shortcomings. This approach aims to not only raise awareness of disability access

issues but also foster empathy by drawing connections between everyday experiences and the challenges faced by people with disabilities (Purba et al., 2023). By giving voice to these concerns, RBS hopes to promote positive change and ensure that public facilities like the Suroboyo bus are truly inclusive for everyone.

Anyone with access to the internet can start their own broadcaster and content producer. The internet has impacted the radio industry, which has increased the variety of platforms and authors who can broadcast. The interconnectedness of information, communication technology, and media content is what media convergence means, which results in a structural shift with immediate effects on creativity and content to reach the broader community (Midões, 2021). In the context of inclusive content, YouTube serves as an ideal platform for knowledge dissemination among blind and visually impaired individuals, promoting inclusivity in video production and raising awareness of their existence and needs. As in RBS strategies to utilize YouTube, they try to enhance the auditory aspect of the content so that the blind community can gain knowledge.

"Since childhood, blind individuals become accustomed to auditory experiences shaping their understanding of the world, which positively impact their lives. Recognizing the profound impact sound has on their lives, we prioritize the development of content narratives through storytelling."

Interview with RBS Editor-in-Chief

The storyline, voiceovers, and storytelling strength are given more weight in RBS's content than the graphics. This strategy is used because a thorough story helps those with visual impairments to create mental images. For users who are blind or visually impaired, the storytelling narrative on digital platforms may make it easier for them to access (Ho et al., 2022). For the advantage of users who are blind or have vision impairment, it makes use of storytelling narratives in the brain. This focus on storytelling is not just about accessibility; it leverages the inherent power of narrative in the human brain. Research suggests that solid narratives activate different brain regions responsible for imagery, memory, and emotional response, creating a richer and more immersive listening experience for everyone (Chen et al., 2023).

Radio can help to reduce stigma and discrimination by providing a platform for people with disabilities and other marginalized groups to share their stories and experiences (Heywood, 2020). RBS's strategies have impacted all aspects a radio community can do to the targeted community. RBS's focus on local issues and audio content makes information potentially

accessible to those who might struggle with traditional media formats. By providing a platform for individuals with disabilities to voice their perspectives, RBS stations help break down stereotypes and ensure the disability community is recognized and heard. This can help to challenge negative attitudes and stereotypes and promote greater empathy and understanding (Henry et al., 2023).

Moreover, being involved in radio production fosters self-confidence and communication skills, empowering individuals with disabilities. This newfound ability to share their stories and perspectives can be incredibly motivating. Thus, community radio engages directly with local knowledge in local languages, fostering an understanding of various forms of information (Rimmer, 2021). RBS stations can serve as a platform for people with disabilities to connect and share experiences. This fosters a sense of community and belonging, which can be crucial for individuals facing similar challenges (Dawn, 2023). By addressing this phenomenon, our study aims to provide valuable insights into the intersection of radio, disability empowerment, and inclusivity within the Indonesian context, particularly in Surabaya.

This paper explores how the radio community is optimized to raise disability awareness through content production in digital media. It has examined their efforts to overcome the inherent challenges of audio-only communication, their commitment to portraying the positive aspects of disability, and their focus on accessibility within public facilities. While this study sheds light on RBS's unique approach, it is essential to acknowledge that the effectiveness of their specific strategies in raising disability awareness falls outside the scope of this current analysis.

CONCLUSION

The strategies employed by radio communities on YouTube to promote inclusivity and equality within society encompass collaborative content planning conducted weekly under the supervision of the Alliance of Independent Journalists, active efforts to introduce and highlight disability-friendly public facilities, and the production of content-rich in audio aspects and robust storytelling techniques. Through these initiatives, these communities seek to create engaging and accessible content for diverse audiences, including individuals with disabilities. By advocating for accessibility and employing narrative-driven approaches, they aim to foster inclusivity and equality within society, ensuring that visually impaired individuals are active and engaged participants in the digital radio community on YouTube.

To promote inclusiveness and equality in society, RBS has come up with a diversity of strategies. First is weekly content planning, where everyone collaborates to construct the appropriate content. Next, the content must highlight public places accessible to people with disabilities or any recent issues on inclusivity. Then, the content production should emphasize

audio-rich content, which they do by using effective storytelling techniques. YouTube was chosen to host this content because it is widely used and an ideal platform for diverse knowledge creation and sharing. RBS tries to produce the content with an emphasis on the audio aspect. This shift towards inclusivity and audio-centric content aligns with RBS's strategy to empower the visually impaired community. RBS enhances accessibility for blind and visually impaired users by emphasizing storytelling and audio elements over graphics.

The radio community has been optimized for public knowledge dissemination to a broader community. New digital media, such as YouTube, has been widely used to empower the radio community. In this area, the concept of the radio community has shifted since digital and social media have been utilized to enhance the power of the radio community. Therefore, further study shall explore how effective the strategies in disseminating the critical messages in raising disability awareness in urban cities are. This could reveal how digital media platforms can be more inclusive for people with disabilities than other broadcasting forms.

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