

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS BY THE SEMARANG CITY FRIENDS OF THE DISABLED COMMUNITY (FDC) IN EMPOWERING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

**Kevina Lena Faustina**

Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo,  
Indonesia

Email: lenakevina@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

*This research focuses on empowering the Semarang City Community of Friends of Persons with Disabilities through Non-Formal education programs. The Friends of Disabilitas Community (FDC) offers various training courses such as sewing, hydroponic planting, and self-development. The program is designed to improve the practical, financial, and social skills of people with disabilities to reduce social isolation and stigma that they often face. The research method used is qualitative with a descriptive approach, including direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Research shows that the FDC program succeeded in improving participants' skills and confidence in facing various challenges, while the Latent Function includes changes in people's perceptions. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of continuous support and comprehensive evaluation to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of non-formal education programs for people with disabilities in FDC Semarang City.*

### KEYWORDS

*Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Non-Formal Education Programs, Functionalism Theory in Social Inclusion*



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### INTRODUCTION

People with disabilities in Indonesia face many challenges in their daily lives, especially in terms of education and work. Data from the Central Statistics Agency in 2023 shows that around 8.5 percent or 22.97 million people of Indonesia's total population are people with disabilities (Supanji, 2023). They often have difficulty accessing basic services such as inclusive education and equal employment opportunities. Therefore, it is very important to empower people with disabilities through education to improve their quality of life. Education is one of the cornerstones in building an inclusive and equitable society, although in reality there

#### How to cite:

#### E-ISSN:

Kevina Lena Faustina. (2024). The Effectiveness Of Non-Formal Education Programs By The Semarang City Friends Of The Disabled Community (FDC) In Empowering People With Disabilities. *Journal Eduvest*. 4(11), 11155-11164  
2775-3727

are still obstacles for some people, especially people with disabilities, in accessing education. In Indonesia, as in many other developing countries, people with disabilities still face major challenges in accessing proper education. To overcome this, various initiatives are needed, including non-formal education programs that are tailored to needs (Astuti, 2022).

Non-Formal Education is an effective means of providing learning opportunities for people with disabilities. Non-Formal Education includes a wide range of programs and activities aimed at meeting the learning needs of individuals outside the formal education system. These programs are often more flexible and can be tailored to the specific needs of students, including students with disabilities (Fakhiratunnisa et al., 2022). One of them is the Friends of the Community of Persons with Disabilities in Semarang City, FDC is an organization that is committed to empowering people with disabilities through various non-formal education programs. FDC was established with the aim of supporting and educating people with disabilities so that they can live more actively in community life. FDC seeks to provide broad access to people with disabilities to realize their potential through various activities such as skills training, workshops, and other empowerment programs. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of non-formal education programs organized by FDC in empowering people with disabilities in Semarang City.

One of FDC's flagship programs is Professional Skills Training. This program aims to help people with disabilities acquire skills that are relevant to the needs of the job market so that they can more easily get jobs that match their abilities. This training covers a wide range of areas, from sewing class skills, plywood decorating, presto milkfish cooking class, hydroponic plant cultivation, to social skills such as communication, time management, managing emotions, and being responsible. Through this training, participants will get benefits or wages from the results of their own hard work to be sold to the general public. In addition to vocational training, FDC also organizes various activities aimed at increasing the confidence and independence of people with disabilities. There is a social empowerment program that is also an integral part of FDC's efforts in empowering people with disabilities. Activities such as workshops, seminars and group discussions focused on expanding knowledge about the rights of persons with disabilities and strategies to address discrimination and social prejudice. Through this work, FDC seeks to create a more inclusive and friendly environment for people with disabilities to participate more actively in community life (Arawindha, 2023).

Structural Theory Functionalism is an approach in sociology that views society as a complex system in which various parts or elements work together to maintain stability and balance. Robert K. Merton, a well-known American sociologist, developed this theory by adding important concepts that explain how these factors work. Merton emphasized that every part of the social structure has a role or function in maintaining the stability and survival of society. For example, educational institutions function to educate individuals and prepare them to play a role in society. The Theory of Structural Functionalism by Robert K. Merton is famous for the concept of manifest function and latent function, Manifest function is a function that is realized and desired, namely the goals and results felt by

members of the Society. Meanwhile, latent functions are unconscious or undesirable functions, namely unexpected consequences of a behavior or social structure. Merton also acknowledged that not all social or cultural structures work together to achieve social balance. However, Merton emphasizes the importance of a neutral analysis without assuming that all aspects of society work for good (Umanailo & Basrun, 2019).

This research uses a descriptive approach, a qualitative method, with a type of field research in Roemah Difabel. Data mining will be carried out through in-depth interviews with program participants, FDC members, and other stakeholders. In addition, participatory observation and analysis of activities will be used to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of this program. Thus, this research is expected to provide detailed and context-rich data about the way non-formal education programs work and contribute to the Semarang City FDC, what challenges are faced, and the impact to be obtained on the empowerment of people with disabilities.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Type of Research**

This type of research uses a type of field research. The source of the data comes from research in the field and visiting the research site directly. In this study, the researcher tries to describe how the Effectiveness of Non-Formal Education Programs by the Community of Friends of the Disabled in the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities is based on visible or as it is that is happening and has occurred during the research.

### **Research Methods**

The method used in this study is using the Qualitative Method. The qualitative method is a research method that collects data by face-to-face, then interacting with people at the research site. The information explored in the qualitative method will be carried out in depth, so that there is an opportunity to gain insight for data analysis. The data generated by this qualitative method will usually produce a type, quality, or symbol that is typical of the information obtained after the researcher conducts research.

### **Research Approach**

This research approach uses a descriptive approach, which is research that provides a careful description of a certain individual or group by narrating experiences and phenomena that occur about the state and symptoms that follow. The descriptive approach is easier to use because it usually uses a small group process, so that the researcher is easier to go to the research goal, which is to interpret all the phenomena that occur to find the meaning behind the reality that occurs in the research area, precisely on Jl. MT Haryono No. 266 Semarang, right opposite Radio Gajah Mada.

### **Data Mining Techniques**

In this study, the data methods used by the researcher in data mining are, as follows:

a. Observation

The observation or direct observation method is a data collection activity by conducting systematic research and involving a continuous monitoring process. Observation aims to monitor and observe all forms of activities that are happening or ongoing, to find out and understand the events that are being studied by conducting direct research on the conditions and objects of approach to empowerment activities organized by the Friends of the Disabled Community, so as to obtain clear research on the condition of the research object as an application material to meet the final semester exam of the researcher.

b. Interview

Interviews are a way of collecting data by asking various questions directly to the resource person to obtain information as research. An interview conducted by a researcher, namely an unstructured interview, or an interview that is conducted in depth, flexible, does not have to be based on a list of questions that have been made, because the benefits of unstructured interviews can produce perspectives, chronology, impact and answer the formulation of the problem being researched by the researcher.

c. Documentation

Documentation is the process of searching and retrieving data through records, books, newspapers, and then connected with other phenomena to strengthen data. Documentation is the most important data result, because it is clear that the researcher is actually researching what is being studied directly.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Contribution of Non-Formal Education Programs by the Community of Friends of the Disabled**

Non-Formal Education has an important role in strengthening social inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities. In modern society, social inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities are receiving increasing attention. The focus of social inclusion ensures that everyone has an equal opportunity to process and participate in all aspects of the field in society. On the other hand, the empowerment of people with disabilities is associated with efforts to improve their abilities and increase opportunities for economic, social, and environmental empowerment. The Semarang City Friends of Persons with Disabilities Community (FDC) is an organization that focuses on non-formal education to achieve this goal. According to (UNESCO, 2019). Non-formal education includes a variety of programs aimed at meeting the learning needs of individuals outside of the traditional school environment. These programs are often more flexible, affordable, and suitable for a diverse range of learners. The Semarang City Friends of Disability Community (FDC) was established with the main goal of supporting people with disabilities through various non-formal education programs (Komariah et al., 2021). FDC's main programs include:

#### ***Sewing Training***

The Effectiveness Of Non-Formal Education Programs By The Semarang City Friends Of The Disabled Community (FDC) In Empowering People With Disabilities

This training provides practical skills in the field of sewing that can be used to find a job or start an independent business, because usually the output of the training is FDC often holds exhibitions at Simpang Lima Semarang City when Car Free Day is held on Sundays. The exhibition aims to display the works of people with disabilities and if anyone is interested, visitors can directly buy the works. In addition to training people with disabilities in direct experience in selling, all people with disabilities will also be taught how to market to the community around Simpang Lima to communicate with others to help reduce the sense of social isolation that is often experienced by people with disabilities (Sadiawati et al., 2023). In addition, the success of people with disabilities in marketing products is also expected to change the public's perception of the abilities of people with disabilities. The following are the steps of the Sewing Training organized by FDC, namely First, the training begins with an introduction and motivational session to encourage people with disabilities to understand the importance of being skilled. Second, it teaches the basics of sewing theory such as the introduction of types of fabrics, fabric stitch patterns, and the tools used. Third, after being taught theory, then people with disabilities began to be taught basic sewing techniques such as making stitch patterns, cutting fabrics, and sewing straight. There is a phrase from the Founder of the Friends of the Disabled Community

"Children with disabilities can start practicing straight sewing for a year, ma'am. You have to be slow and diligent so that your hands are not stiff" (Mrs. Novi, 59 years old).

Mrs. Novi's statement explained that, the disabled child can in fact do what many people do, they show with their persistence who practice earnestly. Fourth, do advanced sewing techniques such as making buttons, zippers, and folds. The following practical activities for people with disabilities will certainly not be allowed to practice alone, they will always need to be accompanied by professionals in their fields.

### **Figure 1. Sewing Training**

The fifth step is to teach designing clothes or other products to practice creativity. All creations will always be accepted and appreciated at the Roemah



Difabel gallery. Step Six, Persons with disabilities will be given assignments for the final project by combining all the results of their skills that have been learned.

Seventh, after the assignment is collected, the assignment will be assessed and will get feedback for improvement or an evaluation in order to be able to practice again and produce better work than good ones.

### ***Hydroponic Plant Cultivation Training***

This training provides practical skills in modern agriculture that carry out maintenance and utilization of plants without using planting media such as soil or fertilizer (Wali et al., 2021). This cultivation training is certainly to increase economic independence and strengthen social inclusion for people with disabilities. Because, usually the output of the training is FDC selling kale as a hydroponic harvest to vegetable baskets that travel around the area around the Roemah Difabel Basecamp. The following are the steps of the Hydroponic Plant Cultivation Training organized by FDC, namely First, the training begins with an introduction to various plants, an explanation of the benefits of hydroponic cultivation and motivational sessions to increase the enthusiasm of participants with disabilities for training. Second, teaching basic hydroponic concepts such as types of hydroponic systems, plant nutrients, and the water cycle used when using planting media. Third, explaining the efficiency of water and land use to produce faster harvests. Fourth, explaining the procedures for preparing hydroponic systems in making installations to regulating nutrients, Fifth, starting to directly practice planting plant seedlings, maintaining plants, and overcoming common problems in hydroponic cultivation. The following practical activities for people with disabilities will certainly not be allowed to practice alone, they will always need to be accompanied by people who are indeed in their field.

### **Figure 2. Hydroponic Plant Cultivation Training**

This photo depicts a group of people with disabilities who are doing direct practice of planting hydroponic plant seedlings. They seem focused and enthusiastic



as they learn how to maintain plants and address common problems in hydroponic cultivation. Each participant is accompanied by an experienced professional who

provides direction and support. The planting media used is styrofoam and plastic bottles, showing an environmentally friendly approach. The assistance provided ensures that the participants can learn well and feel confident in every step of the practice they do.

The sixth step is to conduct training on business management, including business planning, business planning, marketing, and financial management to provide knowledge to participants with disabilities on how to direct sales strategies, online sales with various partnerships and even local traders. Seventh step, the disabled will be tasked with managing a small hydroponic project as an application of all the skills that have been learned. The eighth step, after applying the practice to wait for hydroponic plants to grow and develop, plants that are ready to harvest will be assessed, and people with disabilities will get feedback for further improvement.

### ***Self-Development Training***

In addition to technical skills, FDC also offers personal development courses such as communication training, stress and emotion management through painting, and confidence building. The training is very important to help people with disabilities feel more confident in the social and professional environment. In communication training, learn the basic principles of communication, such as active listening, speaking clearly, and understanding body language. Engage participants with disabilities in a variety of communication practice activities, including role-playing and group discussions, to improve their skills. In stress and emotion management, various stress management techniques are taught, such as deep breathing, muscle relaxation, and meditation. One of them can be painting as a way to express emotions and cope with stress. Participants are taught basic painting techniques and encouraged to express themselves through art.

### **Figure 3. Training to express yourself by painting**

The photo depicts a painting training session held by the Semarang City Friends of the Disabled Community (FDC). In the photo, several participants with



disabilities can be seen who are engrossed in expressing themselves through paintings. This training is very important for friends with disabilities because

painting becomes an effective medium of expression, helping them channel emotions and feelings that are difficult to express in words. Additionally, painting activities can reduce stress and improve mental health. Through this training, people with disabilities can also develop their artistic skills, which has the potential to open up new opportunities in the field of art and creativity (Nur, 2020).

In the Self-Confidence Enhancement training, participants with disabilities will be given sessions that focus on self-development, including setting personal goals, building self-esteem, and overcoming fear or doubt. To encourage participants to recognize and celebrate their achievements, no matter how small, to increase their confidence. Meanwhile, in social interaction training, participants with disabilities will be taught basic social skills, such as getting to know new people, maintaining conversations, and social ethics (Hasan, 2023). In order to prepare participants with disabilities to be able to enter the work environment, including how to face job interviews, work in a team, and adapt to a professional environment.

### **Challenges Faced By The Community Of Friends Of The Disabled**

The Semarang City Friends of the Disabled Community (FDC) is an organization that is committed to empowering people with disabilities through various non-formal education programs. Despite having achieved many successes in its various programs, FDC still faces various challenges in carrying out these activities. These challenges relate to aspects such as resource limitations, accessibility, and social stigma, which affect program effectiveness and participant well-being. Among them are:

1. **Funding**, One of the biggest challenges is the limited funds to support the implementation of the program. Non-formal educational activities require costs for equipment, training materials, instructor honorariums, and supporting facilities. These funding limitations often limit the number of participants that can be accommodated and the quality of training provided.
2. **Human Resources**, The availability of experienced and professional instructors in educating people with disabilities is also a challenge. FDC needs to ensure that teaching staff have a deep understanding of the specific needs of participants.
3. **Adequate facilities**, People with disabilities need accessible facilities, such as ramps, special toilets, large enough spaces, or equipment to support the smooth running of the program. Thus, not all training venues have this facility, thus limiting the comfort and full participation of participants. In addition, many people with disabilities have difficulty accessing training locations due to transportation limitations. The absence of disability-friendly transportation is a significant obstacle in ensuring the consistent attendance of participants (Dewi, 2013).
4. **Stigma and Social Perception**, stigma and negative perception still exist in society, so it often makes people with disabilities reluctant to participate in the available programs, for fear of being looked down upon or not accepted. So the need for support from the surrounding community is very important in running non-formal education programs. Lack of understanding and support



from the general public can hinder the implementation of the program and isolate participants from their environment (Mardhatillah, 2021).

5. Program Sustainability: Non-formal education programs require long-term planning and continuity to achieve optimal results. Challenges in maintaining program sustainability often arise due to funding fluctuations, staff turnover, or policy changes. From the programs that have been implemented, evaluations can also be carried out to accurately measure the impact and effectiveness of non-formal education programs is challenging. FDC needs to develop a comprehensive evaluation method to assess participants' progress and adjust the program according to changing needs.

The contextualization of the above discussion based on the Theory of Functionalism by Robert K. Merton to the contribution of the Community of Friends of the Disabled (FDC) in non-formal education shows the existence of various manifest and latent functions in efforts to empower people with disabilities. The manifest function of the sewing training program, hydroponic plant cultivation, and self-development is the improvement of practical and economic skills for people with disabilities, as well as better social inclusion. Latent functions, which may not be realized at first, include changes in public perception of people with disabilities and a reduction in social isolation. The challenges faced by FDC, such as limited funding, facilities, and social stigma, show that social structures do not always work in harmony to achieve balance. Therefore, the importance of a neutral analysis, as suggested by Merton, is very relevant in understanding the dynamics of the FDC program and its impact on society.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the above research discussion, non-formal education programs carried out by the Semarang City Friends of the Disabled Community (FDC) play an important role in social inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities. FDC provides a variety of practical training such as sewing, hydroponic plant cultivation, and self-development, which not only improves technical skills but also builds confidence and economic independence. These programs help reduce social isolation, change people's perceptions of disability, and provide opportunities for people with disabilities to actively participate in community life.

Despite its many successes, FDC faces a variety of significant challenges, including limited funding, lack of experienced instructors, and inadequate facilities. In addition, stigma and negative perceptions from the community as well as disability-friendly transportation issues also hinder the full participation of people with disabilities in these programs. The sustainability of these programs is also a major challenge, requiring long-term planning and comprehensive evaluation methods to accurately assess the impact and effectiveness of the programs.

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