

Puppet Shows for Students with Hearing Impairment: a Model of Creation

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Abstract

Individuals with disabilities are still marginalized in terms of access to facilities and opportunities for advancing in science, technology, and the arts. The arts can potentially play a key role in empowering people with disabilities through collaborative activities. The functions of art for individuals with disabilities are diverse, offering numerous benefits and opportunities across various aspects of their lives. Art can serve as a medium for expression, therapy, social inclusion, and developing their potential and talents. This research produces a collaborative, multi-dimensional *wayang* performance model involving puppetry, comics, and dance. It aims to empower artistic media (puppetry, comics, and dance) to increase the participation and appreciation of individuals with hearing impairment. The utilization of this art media makes the performance adaptive to hearing impairment conditions. Puppetry in the form of comics, performance scripts, and dance movements created according to hearing impairment conditions creates a work with an inclusive performative design. The research employs participatory art research and development methods through identifying problems, formulating ideas, experimentation, selection, implementation, and presentation. Participatory workshops can be a means of expression and creativity, entertaining and nourishing the soul, an inclusive forum that involves the potential and talents of people with disabilities. Research outputs include international journal publications, copyright registration for puppet crafting and accessories, performance scripts, dance choreography, and socialization/promotion videos.

Keywords: *wayang* puppetry, comics, dance, deafness, art collaboration.

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1. Introduction

People with disabilities are people who experience physical, intellectual, mental, and sensory limitations for an extended period in interacting with the environment. They may encounter obstacles and difficulties in participating fully and effectively with other citizens based on equal rights[1]. Based on Law No. 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights in Article 42, it guarantees that every citizen who is elderly, physically disabled, or mentally disabled has the right to receive special care, education, training, and assistance or state costs to ensure a decent life following their human dignity, increase self-confidence and the ability to participate in community, national and state life.

The number of people with disabilities in the world is at least 10% of the human population. They suffer from various disabilities such as physical, mental, and social disabilities. Eighty percent of people with disabilities are in developing countries[2]. The lack of public understanding of this minority group results in groups of people with disabilities still being looked down upon and treated differently from the majority of society. The lack of public understanding of this minority group results in groups of people with disabilities still being looked down upon and treated differently from the majority of society[3].

Several studies have concluded that people with disabilities are still marginalized in the fulfillment of facilities

and access to the development of science, technology, art, and mathematics (STEAM). Equal access rights to STEAM development for people with disabilities are still a severe problem in this country [4][5][6]. Empirically, people with disabilities who often experience discriminatory treatment in social life result in neglect of the fulfillment of the rights of people with disabilities, even though legally, there are legal products that protect their rights.

On the other hand, the art world can play a role in fulfilling the rights of people with disabilities through empowering activities [7]. Art for people with disabilities can provide various benefits and opportunities. Art can be a means of expression, therapy, social inclusion, and a place to develop their potential and talents. More studies, innovations, and initiatives are needed to explore the benefits of art for people with disabilities, considering that each individual is unique in experiencing and benefiting from art according to their respective conditions and potential. Art interventions for people with disabilities are very much needed as a medium of expression and creativity, even for therapy and mental health. Art events are also a means of social inclusion that involves people with disabilities in community activities and in developing their potential and talents. The art of puppetry involves aspects of performing and visual arts. People with hearing impairment will experience several obstacles in participating in puppetry performances in general. Innovations must be made in puppets, word balloons, accompanying *karawitan* (Javanese music ensemble), and scripts adapted to their limited conditions. In many shadow puppet performances, puppeteers such as the late Ki Manteb Sudarsono and Ki Seno Nugroho innovated scenes with minimal dialogue. They explored the movements and expressions of the puppets. This fact can inspire innovation in artistic creations for people with hearing impairment. It is necessary to create puppets and accessories such as word balloons commonly used in comics, scripts, and accompanying *karawitan* specifically for people with hearing impairment.

The themes of socialization about disabilities can be messages in puppet show scripts. These themes can be mentioned as equality and inclusion that encourage every individual, including people with disabilities, to have the same rights to participate in social, economic, and cultural activities. People with disabilities also have the right to receive inclusive education that ensures equal access to education so that they can learn and develop in a safe and comfortable environment. Accessibility is an important theme that ensures that public spaces are easily accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. The theme of eliminating stigma against disabilities is still relevant today, considering that stigma practices consciously or unconsciously still occur in society. Support from all parties, including art institutions, is an effort to empower and make them part of society. This support is a shared responsibility between the government and society.

Based on the background that has been explained, the problem is centered on the realization of collaborative work with people with disabilities through a creation workshop, with the formulation: 1) How to create a *wayang* puppet with a comic character equipped with accessories, speech balloons, and captions? 2) How do we create a *wayang* script according to the needs and abilities of people with hearing impairment through innovation in scriptwriting? 3) How can supportive and expressive dance movements be created with the addition of sign language? 4) How can an innovative puppet show be organized with people with hearing impairment to improve their role and self-esteem in society?

This research employs a participatory art creation approach that instills participant habits without coercion. The participatory art approach allows for a common understanding between researchers and participants. The understanding of the aesthetic value that will be created is not formulated by the researcher's ability but rather something open to development [8]. Thus, the researcher creates an atmosphere that allows aesthetic value to be present naturally with all its limitations. In participatory art, the knowledge and experience of participants in the environment can enrich the design [8].

The participatory art approach is a whole of humanitarian values that involves community participation in the creation process. This approach produces participatory works that raise the dignity of participants. Whatever the results, it will be the participants' pride and will become a valuable contribution to the dynamics of arts and culture. The participatory art and design approach can be considered successful based on indicators. 1. physically creating new works of art. 2. Socio-psychologically, this approach relies on community participation, restoring trust and self-esteem, awakening social energy, and fostering a new spirit for socio-economic improvement [9].

Research on art and disability has so far been conducted mainly by academics in the health sector and has not shown the process and results of further exploration of art. However, this study agrees that art can be a means of relaxation for people with disabilities, and art can even be an alternative therapy. Art can help individuals of all ages explore feelings and beliefs, reduce stress, overcome problems and conflicts, and create a sense of comfort [10] [11]. Psychomotor therapy can reduce the level of anxiety of people with disabilities. Research on

psychomotor therapy [12] [13] proves that there is a significant effect of this therapy on the level of anxiety of patients. The average level of anxiety after psychomotor drawing therapy decreased.

Optimism toward creating art with disabilities is supported by several research recommendations [14] [15], which suggest that further research on art in disabilities can focus on productive group activities. In its implementation, researchers should also have an art group from outside the participant group who can carry out various art activities to guide participants in art activities. This group can also motivate participants to get involved in art activities. One thing that stood out among the participants in the study was the lack of ability and mastery of art. This condition can be seen from the difficulties faced by participants during the intervention session. After undergoing intervention through an art therapy approach, participants experienced a decrease in negative symptoms. Participants are advised to continue practicing techniques independently. In addition, participants are advised to continue improving their abilities in the field of art to be able to channel emotions and reduce levels of boredom. Participants should be active in art activities regularly. Art activities can also channel energy in a fun way.

This research on creating art with people with disabilities helps to give meaning to the participants' lives. People with disabilities usually feel a lack of meaning in their lives, especially those who live with their families. People with disabilities often behave passively and feel lonely in their lives. Moreover, many people with disabilities are not accepted by their social environment. This condition affects how people with disabilities give meaning to their lives [16][17]. When people with disabilities return to their homes, they often think negatively about being able to recover completely, so they are not confident. Negative stigma causes them to lack confidence because they consider themselves to be in a state of continuous illness. All of this is a challenge for them to find the meaning of their lives [18][19][20].

Puppet innovation for people with hearing impairment is urgent because it can provide benefits in various aspects. Workshops and puppet shows for people with hearing impairment offer a unique multisensory experience, perhaps involving little hearing but more intervention in sight and feelings. For people with hearing impairment, the innovation of puppets and accessories that are more visual can bring a profound experience through their movements and a wide variety of forms, allowing them to enjoy stories and imagine deeply. They will enjoy and play *wayang* using more puppets and texts and sign language interpretation, allowing them to engage in the story and dialogue. In addition, *wayang* art can be a creative medium through which people can express themselves through the roles and movements of *wayang* characters.

This research can provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to actively participate in traditional culture and arts, enriching their lives, improving social skills, and providing a solid sense of accomplishment and dignity. This innovation can also help expand society's understanding and acceptance of diversity and inclusion.

2. Methods

This research uses participatory art research and development methods through the following processes. 1) Identification of essential issues and themes about people with disabilities. 2) Formulation of ideas begins with discussing the format of the work, compiling a script, designing puppets and accessories, dance movements, stage settings, and video recording techniques. 3) Experimentation with people with disabilities to realize the puppet show script with word balloons and gestures, puppets and word balloon accessories, captions, expressive dance movements with the addition of sign language, and stage setting design. 4) Selection through testing through discussions with the production team and resource persons. 5) Implementation is creating a studio-scale project to test the selection results. 6) Presentation to the arts community to measure the project's success and gather feedback. 7) Socialization is done before and during the program using digital posters and videos. 8) Project review with special education school teachers and performing arts practitioners.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 *The collaborative process between artists and students with hearing impairment*

The involvement of students with hearing impairment in the experimentation process is critical to creating an inclusive and adaptive performance. They are not simply involved as passive spectators but are actively involved in every stage of the creative process. For example, in the experimentation session, students with hearing impairment provide feedback on how they understand the story conveyed through movement and visuals. This feedback is used to adjust performance elements to make it more understandable. Involving students with hearing impairment directly also allows the puppeteers and choreographers to understand better the needs and

perceptions of the potential audience towards the performing arts. This involvement helps to ensure that the resulting performance is genuinely accessible and enjoyable for those with hearing disabilities.

3.1.1. Adaptation of *wayang* performance script

Adapting puppet scripts for people with hearing impairment requires adaptation to several elements to make them accessible while maintaining artistic and traditional values. Several adjustments include: 1) Use of sign language: dialogue and narration in puppets must be translated into sign language. Sign language allows people with hearing impairment to understand the story and message of the show with the help of a sign language interpreter present during the performance. 2) Stronger visualization: More prominent visualization can strengthen puppets relying on verbal narratives. Character movements, facial expressions, and the use of colors and symbols in comics or dances must be given more attention to make them more communicative for audiences with hearing impairment.





Figure 1. Sign language and dance training.

3.2. Method of creating puppets for the deaf

The puppet creation model or method for students with hearing impairment results from a participatory research approach combining several art elements, such as puppetry, comics, dance, and sign language. This method provides an opportunity for people with hearing impairment to actively participate in creating art so that they can express themselves and develop their talents.

3.2.1. Identification of problems and themes

The initial process in creating this art was to identify the problems people with hearing impairment faced in accessing traditional performing arts, such as shadow puppet shows and dance. This art is basically based on audio and verbal narratives, which cannot be enjoyed by those who are deaf. Therefore, the theme of inclusivity and accessibility is the main focus of this work. People with hearing impairment are also often marginalized in access to art, so the creation of this work aims to open the way for them to enjoy and contribute to the world of art.

3.2.2. Formulation of ideas and design

After identifying the problem, the process of formulating ideas and art concepts begins. In this case, the creative team discusses an inclusive performance format by combining various visual elements and movements so that students with hearing impairment can follow the performance without obstacles. The main concept of the puppet show for students with hearing impairment involves three key elements. 1) Comic puppet: Using puppet characters with a comical appearance equipped with word balloons and thought balloons like in comics. This element allows audiences with hearing impairment to follow the dialogue and story visually. 2) Expressive dance movements: More expressive and communicative dance movements combined with sign language. The purpose of this element is to ensure that the narrative can be conveyed not only through words but also through body movements that students with hearing impairment can understand. 3) Performance script: A script designed explicitly considering the abilities and needs of people with hearing impairment. In addition to visual word balloons, this script includes social messages about inclusion and equality for people with disabilities.

3.2.3. Experimentation

Experimentation is an essential stage in this participatory art creation method. Students with hearing impairment are involved in the creation process at this stage. They play an active role in designing puppets, determining the

storyline, and developing dance movements combined with sign language. This experimentation aims to find effective forms of visual communication that can replace or complement verbal narratives. Experimentation includes 1) Creation of puppets: Comical character puppets equipped with visual accessories, such as word balloons, thought balloons, and captions that function as communication tools for people with hearing impairment. 2) Expressive dance movements with sign language: The movements created are intended for beauty and as a communication medium through hand signals and body movements that audiences with hearing impairment can understand.



Figure 2. Puppets with word balloons

3.2.4 Selection and testing of work results

After the experimentation stage, a selection is made of the works that have been created. This selection is carried out by the production team and figures who are experts in art and disability. Trials of the work are carried out on a studio scale to test its feasibility and effectiveness before being presented to the public. This stage is crucial to measure whether the work is inclusive and follows the needs of students with hearing impairment.

3.2.5. Implementation and presentation

Implementation is the stage where the selected works are produced as performances. On a studio scale, this work is tested through small performances involving participants from various backgrounds, including Special education teachers and art practitioners. This performance aims to measure the extent to which the work has successfully conveyed messages to audiences with hearing impairment. Furthermore, this work will be presented to the public as a form of inclusive and innovative art appreciation.

3.2.6 Socialization and review of the work result

Before the work is presented, socialization is carried out through promotional media, such as digital posters and videos. This socialization aims to introduce the work to a broader public, especially people with disabilities. In addition, after the work is presented, a joint work review is carried out with special education teachers and art practitioners to obtain helpful feedback for further development. This activity also aims to provide new insights to artists regarding the importance of inclusion in artwork.

The art creation model for students with hearing impairment used in puppet making is rooted in the participatory art model often used in art therapy. Participatory art emphasizes the direct involvement of participants in creating the art without any coercion or strict instructions. In this case, participants with hearing impairment are fully involved in every stage of the creation process, from design and experimentation to implementation of the work.

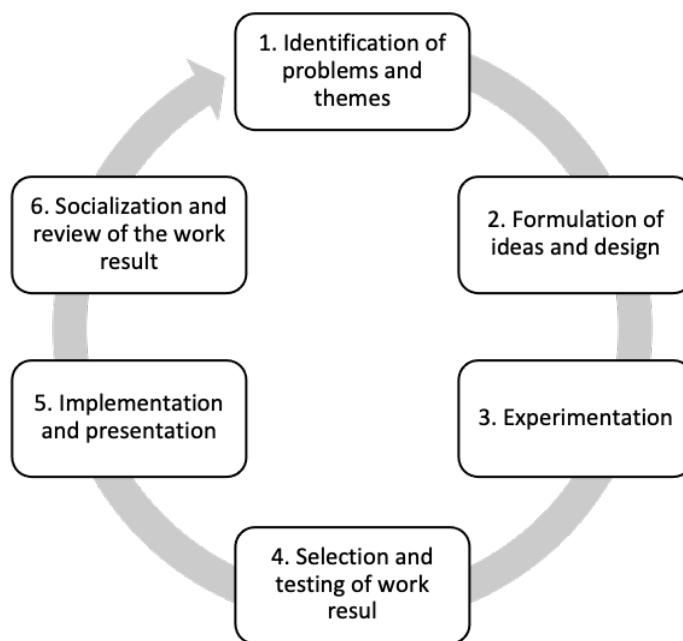


Figure 3. Creation model

This participatory art method is similar to the approach used in art therapy, where art is not only used as a means of expression but also as a tool to empower marginalized individuals, including people with disabilities. This model allows students with hearing impairment to be creative and explore their potential while increasing their self-confidence and self-esteem.

4. Conclusion

The art creation method for students with hearing impairment, which started with puppets, is an innovation that combines traditional art with inclusive elements so that students with hearing impairment can access it. Through a participatory approach, this work is a means of entertainment and a medium of empowerment for people with disabilities to express themselves and contribute to the art world. This puppet show can then be developed into a comic or interactive digital media, making it more easily accessed and understood by people with hearing impairment through clear text and images.

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