

Creative Inclusive Empowerment Model for Persons with Disabilities in Rural Areas: Integrating Institutional Support, Skill Development, and Market Access

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Abstract

This study addresses the gap in the literature on disability empowerment by proposing a creative economy-based empowerment model that integrates institutional support, skill development, and multi-stakeholder collaboration in rural contexts. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and documentation. The findings reveal a three-tier empowerment structure (daily, monthly, and annual income programs) supported by LKS Rumah Harapan Mulya as the central institutional platform. This study proposes a Creative Inclusive Empowerment Model consisting of four components: institutional support, adaptive skill development, creative production, and market integration. Theoretically, this study extends empowerment theory by demonstrating that institutionally-driven, multi-stakeholder models yield more sustainable outcomes than individually-focused approaches. Practically, the model offers a scalable framework for inclusive rural development that can be adapted by local governments and community organizations. This research employs a qualitative field research approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and documentation. A purposive sampling technique was applied to select 15–20 key informants, including persons with disabilities, village officials, and relevant stakeholders. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, method triangulation, and theory triangulation. The findings show that economic empowerment for persons with disabilities is structured through three main programs organized by LKS Rumah Harapan Mulya: daily income through handicraft production (doormats, splash batik, and prayer beads), monthly income through livestock and agricultural activities, and annual income through goat farming. These activities are supported by adaptive skill training, institutional mentoring, and multi-channel marketing strategies. This study contributes a Creative Inclusive Empowerment Model that highlights the critical role of institutional frameworks and stakeholder collaboration in achieving sustainable economic inclusion for persons with disabilities in rural areas.

Keywords

creative economic; empowerment; disabilities

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ponorogo Regency, like many regions in Indonesia, has economic potential that has not been fully utilized. One group that frequently experiences limited access to economic opportunities is persons with disabilities. Physical, sensory, or cognitive limitations often become barriers for persons with disabilities in obtaining employment or participating in productive economic activities (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). As a result, persons with disabilities are often perceived as unproductive, and their rights are frequently overlooked within society (Aslam & Kingdon, 2012). Disability is not only associated with physical impairments but also includes difficulties in social interaction (Mulgan, 2006). In fact, persons with disabilities have equal rights to a decent standard of living and appropriate employment opportunities. The challenges faced by visually impaired individuals in accessing employment arise from both cultural and structural barriers (Chambers, 1997).

In Balong District, particularly in Karangpatihan Village, there are 96 residents identified as persons with disabilities. The village head, Mr. Eko Mulyadi, explained that the village government actively promotes the economic participation of persons with disabilities through various activities, such as producing doormats for daily income, brick-making, catfish farming as a source of monthly income, and goat farming for annual income. According to the village head, the participation of persons with disabilities in the creative industry sector in Balong District has improved significantly, and the government continues to support initiatives that raise awareness about their equal rights and roles in achieving a decent standard of living and appropriate employment. In addition, the government is encouraged to seriously consider implementing a universal basic income policy as a long-term solution to address issues related to citizens' basic income security. However, in practice, only a limited number of companies currently provide employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Previous studies indicate that persons with disabilities are more likely to experience multidimensional poverty due to limited access to education, employment, and social participation opportunities. (Mitra et al., 2013) found that disability is strongly associated with economic vulnerability in developing countries because individuals with disabilities often face structural barriers that restrict their access to productive employment. Disability and poverty are often interconnected in a cyclical relationship. (Groce et al., 2011) argue that poverty can increase the risk of disability due to limited access to healthcare and education, while disability can further reinforce poverty through reduced employment opportunities. Disability and poverty are often interconnected in a cyclical relationship. Employment opportunities for persons with disabilities remain significantly lower than those for non-disabled individuals. (Chumo et al., 2023) found that structural barriers such as discrimination, limited access to education, and lack of inclusive policies contribute to lower employment participation among persons with disabilities in developing countries. Entrepreneurship

has been identified as an alternative pathway to economic independence for persons with disabilities. (Flew, 2012) found that self-employment and entrepreneurial activities can provide flexible economic opportunities that allow persons with disabilities to overcome barriers present in traditional labor markets.

Economic exclusion remains one of the major challenges faced by persons with disabilities. (Alsop et al., 2005) explain that excluding persons with disabilities from economic activities not only affects their personal welfare but also creates broader economic losses for society, as the potential productivity of this group remains underutilized. Previous studies on creative economic empowerment for persons with disabilities have produced diverse findings. For example, the enactment of the West Kalimantan Provincial Regulation on the Protection and Fulfillment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is expected to serve as a legal foundation for provincial and local governments, businesses, entrepreneurs, and communities in implementing equal opportunities, rehabilitation programs, social assistance, and welfare maintenance for persons with disabilities (Groce et al., 2011). Nevertheless, efforts to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights of persons with disabilities in Timor Tengah Selatan Regency have not yet been implemented optimally (Ndaumanu, 2020). In Gowa Regency, the Dekranasda program focuses on empowering persons with disabilities to produce various high-quality handicraft products (Awaru et al., 2021). Previous studies show that empowerment programs based on social and economic inclusion significantly improve the quality of life and independence of persons with disabilities while also reducing social stigma and discrimination (Fadilah & Hafrizal, n.d.).

These studies share similarities in highlighting various contexts and approaches aimed at improving the economic conditions of persons with disabilities. However, this study differs from the research conducted by (Firdaus et al., 2023) which focused on the effectiveness of economic empowerment for families with intellectual disabilities in Karangpatihan Village. In contrast, the present study focuses on the creative economic empowerment of persons with disabilities in Karangpatihan and Menang Villages using different data collection techniques, namely in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Therefore, this research is expected to contribute novelty to the existing literature. Based on the background presented above, this study examines the model of economic empowerment for persons with disabilities in Karangpatihan Village, Balong District, Ponorogo Regency. Specifically, this study addresses the following research question: How is a creative economic empowerment model for persons with disabilities structured and implemented in rural contexts, and what institutional and collaborative mechanisms contribute to its sustainability?

2. METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach and is categorized as field research. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring social phenomena and understanding the perspectives and experiences of participants in their natural settings (Frey, 2018). The research was conducted in Karangpatihan Village and Menang Village, Ponorogo Regency, Indonesia. In qualitative research, the main instrument is the researcher, while the key informants consist of relevant stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, village heads and village officials, the Social Affairs Office, the Trade Office, the Tourism Office, and financial institutions such as banks and non-bank institutions.

The researcher collected various types of descriptive data in the form of statements, written information, and the observed behavior of informants in order to obtain a holistic understanding of the optimization of the creative industry in Karangpatihan Village, Ponorogo Regency. The data collected consist of both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through verbal information from village heads, village officials, and community members in both villages regarding the development of creative industries, as well as observations of economic activities carried out by persons with disabilities. Secondary data were obtained from official village documents such as policies, reports, and other relevant documents. In addition, supporting sources such as published articles and news reports were used to strengthen the research data.

Data collection techniques in this study include participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The researcher conducted direct observations and interactions with communities of persons with disabilities in Menang Village and Karangpatihan Village, Ponorogo Regency.

To ensure the validity of the data, several validation techniques were applied, including source triangulation, method triangulation, and theory triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing and cross-checking information obtained from different informants, including persons with disabilities, village heads and officials, the Social Affairs Office, the Trade Office, the Tourism Office, and financial institutions. Method triangulation was applied to test the credibility of the data by comparing findings from interviews with results from observations, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and documentation.

Data analysis in this study was conducted for the two research locations, namely Karangpatihan Village in Balong District and Menang Village in Jambon District. The study adopted the interactive data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This approach ensures a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the research findings. According to Sugiyono, qualitative descriptive analysis involves several stages, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification.

Data reduction was conducted by summarizing and selecting the main information to identify themes or categories that guided subsequent data collection. Data display was carried out by presenting the reduced data in the form of descriptive narrative text. During this stage, the analysis was interpreted based on the theoretical framework used in the study. Finally, provisional conclusions were drawn and continuously verified through further data collection, reduction, and data presentation. This iterative process was conducted repeatedly until the data reached a level of saturation and accuracy, after which the final narrative of the research findings was developed.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

Profile of Persons with Disabilities in Karangpatihan Village

Based on the population data of Karangpatihan Village in 2020, the village has a total population of 5,845 residents, of which 96 individuals are persons with disabilities. These individuals consist of different classifications of intellectual disabilities, including mild, moderate, and severe intellectual disabilities.

Persons with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities still possess the potential to be empowered through productive economic activities such as livestock farming and handicrafts. In contrast, individuals with severe intellectual disabilities are generally unable to participate in economic empowerment programs because they remain dependent on others even for fulfilling their basic daily needs. To address this condition, the village government provides monthly basic food assistance for those with severe disabilities (Linatul Chariro, 2023).

Establishment of Rumah Harapan Mulya Social Welfare Institution

According to the village head, Mr. Eko Mulyadi, the village government established the Rumah Harapan Mulya Social Welfare Institution (LKS Rumah Harapan Mulya) as a center for disability empowerment. This institution was officially legalized through the Ministry of Law and Human Rights Decree No. AHU-0000906.AH.01.07 of 2020.

LKS Rumah Harapan Mulya organizes several empowerment programs that are categorized into daily income programs, monthly income programs, and annual income programs.

Daily Income Programs

Daily income activities mainly involve the production of handicrafts. One of the main products is doormats, which are sold for approximately IDR 7,000 per unit. Persons with disabilities are able to produce between one and five doormats per day, with an average production of five units. This allows

them to earn approximately IDR 35,000 per day, which is sufficient to cover their daily meals.

However, it took approximately three years of training before participants were able to produce the doormats independently. The training process was conducted gradually with assistance from mentors and volunteers from LKS Rumah Harapan Mulya. Participants were trained step by step, starting from selecting colors, installing the equipment, assembling the materials, and completing the final knotting process.

Another handicraft product is prayer beads (tasbih) made from small beads arranged using transparent thread. Each tasbih is sold for around IDR 8,000, while the maker receives IDR 4,000 per unit. Producing tasbih requires creativity and counting skills to ensure the correct number of beads, which is typically 33. Initially, participants faced difficulties due to inaccuracies in counting the beads.

Monthly Income Programs

Monthly income programs include livestock and agricultural activities, such as raising free-range chickens, catfish farming, and corn cultivation.

In the free-range chicken program, residents receive chicken seedlings which are raised until they produce eggs. The eggs can then be exchanged for daily necessities at local shops. Some residents also raise the chickens until they reproduce before selling them.

The catfish farming program operates on a three-month cycle. It was initially funded by Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) support from Bank Indonesia. Each family with intellectual disabilities was provided with a small catfish pond measuring approximately 1 × 2 meters. Through this activity, families could earn between IDR 100,000 and IDR 250,000 per harvest. However, this program faced challenges because catfish farming requires relatively intensive care. As a result, corn farming was introduced as an alternative activity to generate periodic income.

Annual Income Programs

The annual income program focuses on goat farming. The training method used by the program managers involves counseling and practical assistance. Each family with intellectual disabilities receives one goat to raise. In addition, five breeding goats are circulated among households. Once the goat gives birth, the breeding goat is transferred to the next participant.

This goat farming program is implemented using a group-based system. Participants are responsible for collecting grass as animal feed. Most participants are already capable of gathering grass independently without requiring intensive instructions. Mentors mainly provide conceptual guidance and supervision. Participants usually begin to generate income after approximately one year, once the goats reproduce.

Development of Creative Industry: Splash Batik

Another creative economic activity is the production of splash batik (batik ciprat). This technique is considered easier for persons with intellectual disabilities to learn because the method involves splashing dye onto fabric using brushes. As a result, participants have successfully produced various splash batik motifs, including abstract patterns, animals, puppets, and plants.

During the production process, participants receive full assistance from mentors, starting from heating the dye, applying the splash technique, coating the fabric with water gloss, and finally washing the fabric. According to Mrs. Yuliana, this batik craft is relatively new. However, the products have already been distributed nationally. The selling price of splash batik is approximately IDR 175,000 per sheet, with a fabric size of 210 cm × 115 cm made from primisima cotton.

Marketing Strategy for Creative Products

The marketing of handicraft products such as doormats, prayer beads, and splash batik utilizes both online and offline channels. Online marketing is conducted through social media platforms, marketplaces, and official websites.

In addition, Karangpatihan Village collaborates with various government institutions and universities. For example, Universitas Indonesia purchased doormats produced by persons with disabilities for use on campus. The Ministry of Trade and the Ministry of Social Affairs have also purchased splash batik products as souvenirs for official events.

Government Support Programs

The Ponorogo Regency Government strongly supports programs aimed at empowering persons with disabilities through various social and economic initiatives. One of the key programs implemented is the **“Rumah Kasih Sayang” (House of Compassion) program**, which focuses on improving the welfare and quality of life of vulnerable communities, including persons with disabilities. This program provides a range of support services, including social assistance, mentoring services, food support, and access to healthcare services such as doctors, nurses, and pharmacists.

Through this program, the local government seeks to ensure that persons with disabilities receive not only basic social protection but also opportunities for social inclusion and community participation. The presence of trained mentors plays an important role in assisting individuals with disabilities in daily activities and facilitating their involvement in empowerment programs. In addition, healthcare services provided through this program help address the medical and psychological needs of persons with disabilities, thereby supporting their overall well-being.

Furthermore, the **“Rumah Kasih Sayang”** program complements the creative economic

empowerment initiatives implemented in Karangpatihan Village. By integrating social protection with economic empowerment programs, the government aims to create a more inclusive development approach that enables persons with disabilities to participate in productive economic activities and gradually achieve economic independence.

Creative Economic Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities

The results of this study indicate that the empowerment of persons with disabilities in Karangpatihan Village is carried out through various creative economic activities such as handicrafts, livestock farming, and agriculture. These programs aim to improve the economic independence and welfare of persons with disabilities. The existence of productive activities such as doormat production, prayer bead crafts, splash batik, and livestock farming demonstrates that individuals with intellectual disabilities still have the potential to participate in economic activities when appropriate training and support are provided.

This finding is consistent with the concept of community empowerment, which emphasizes increasing the capacity and independence of marginalized groups through access to productive resources and participation in development processes. According to Mardikanto and Soebianto, community empowerment aims to enable vulnerable communities to improve their quality of life and achieve economic independence through capacity building, institutional strengthening, and access to resources. Similar findings are reported in research on community empowerment and creative economy, which explains that empowerment efforts encourage communities to develop their skills, creativity, and economic potential in order to achieve economic independence.

Creative Economy as a Strategy for Disability Inclusion

The development of creative economy activities in Karangpatihan Village also reflects the role of creative industries in supporting inclusive economic development. The creative economy relies on creativity, skills, and innovation as the main sources of value creation. In this study, creative economic activities such as splash batik, handicrafts, and bead production allow persons with disabilities to express their creativity while generating income.

Previous studies also highlight the importance of the creative industry sector in improving the welfare of persons with disabilities. Research on disability economic empowerment shows that creative industries can become an effective strategy for improving the welfare and independence of persons with disabilities because these industries emphasize creativity and skills rather than physical labor. Similarly, another study explains that empowering disabled communities through creative economic activities can foster self-confidence, independence, and social inclusion, while also providing economic

benefits for marginalized groups.

Institutional Support in Disability Economic Empowerment

Another important finding of this study is the role of LKS Rumah Harapan Mulya as an institutional platform that facilitates the empowerment process. The institution provides training, mentoring, and marketing support for creative products produced by persons with disabilities. Institutional support is crucial in ensuring the sustainability of empowerment programs.

Previous studies also emphasize that the success of disability empowerment programs depends on the involvement of various stakeholders such as government institutions, community organizations, and the private sector. These actors play important roles in providing training, resources, and inclusive economic opportunities for persons with disabilities. Similarly, a study on disability empowerment models in the creative industry explains that collaboration between stakeholders is necessary to build sustainable empowerment models and ensure that persons with disabilities can achieve economic independence.

Implications of the Creative Economic Empowerment Model

The empowerment model implemented in Karangpatihan Village demonstrates that community-based creative economy programs can become an effective approach to improving the welfare of persons with disabilities. Through training, mentoring, and institutional support, persons with disabilities are able to participate in productive economic activities and gradually develop economic independence.

These findings support the argument that creative economy-based empowerment can strengthen community capacity and promote inclusive development. The integration of creativity, local resources, and institutional support can create sustainable economic opportunities for marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities. The findings indicate that the empowerment program for persons with disabilities in Karangpatihan Village is implemented through a structured model involving institutional support, skill development, and creative economic activities. The overall empowerment model is illustrated in Figure 1.

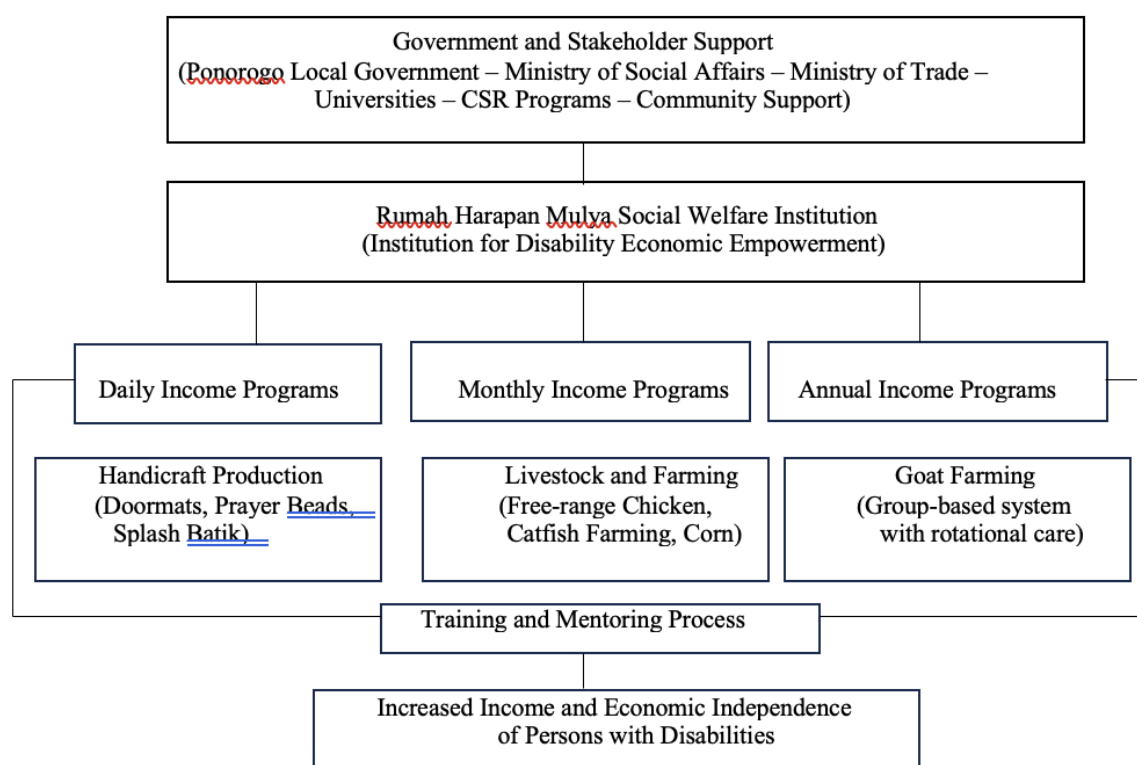


Figure 1. Creative economic empowerment model for persons with disabilities in Karangpatihan Village

3.2. Discussion

Creative Economic Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities

Addressing the research question of how a creative economic empowerment model is structured and sustained in rural contexts, the results of this study indicate that the empowerment of persons with disabilities in Karangpatihan Village is carried out through various creative economic activities such as handicrafts, livestock farming, and agriculture. These programs are institutionally organized and aim to improve the economic independence and welfare of persons with disabilities. The existence of productive activities such as doormat production, prayer bead crafts, splash batik, and livestock farming demonstrates that individuals with intellectual disabilities still have the potential to participate in economic activities when appropriate training and institutional support are provided. Critically, unlike prior studies that treat empowerment as individually driven, this study reveals that a structured institutional platform – LKS Rumah Harapan Mulya – is the central mechanism that makes the model both functional and sustainable.

This finding is consistent with the concept of community empowerment, which emphasizes increasing the capacity and independence of marginalized groups through access to productive resources and participation in development processes. According to Mardikanto and Soebianto, community empowerment aims to enable vulnerable communities to improve their quality of life and achieve economic independence through capacity building, institutional strengthening, and access to

resources. Similar findings are reported in research on community empowerment and creative economy, which explains that empowerment efforts encourage communities to develop their skills, creativity, and economic potential in order to achieve economic independence.

Previous studies also support this finding. For example, (Chawa et al., 2021) found that community-based empowerment programs enable persons with disabilities to actively participate in economic activities and improve their social and economic independence. Similarly, (Renko et al., 2016) reported that entrepreneurship and skill-based economic activities provide alternative employment opportunities for persons with disabilities who often face barriers in the formal labor market. In addition, (Cooney, 2008) emphasizes that training programs focusing on skill development and entrepreneurship can significantly enhance the economic participation and self-confidence of people with disabilities.

Creative Economy as a Strategy for Disability Inclusion

The development of creative economy activities in Karangpatihan Village also reflects the role of creative industries in supporting inclusive economic development. The creative economy relies on creativity, skills, and innovation as the main sources of value creation. In this study, creative economic activities such as splash batik, handicrafts, and bead production allow persons with disabilities to express their creativity while generating income.

Previous studies also highlight the importance of the creative industry sector in improving the welfare of persons with disabilities. (Florida, 2005) explains that the creative economy creates opportunities for individuals to generate economic value through creativity, knowledge, and innovation rather than relying solely on physical labor. Similarly, (Rizky, 2021) argues that creative industries play an important role in inclusive economic development because they provide employment opportunities for marginalized groups and encourage local economic participation. Furthermore, (Hawkins & Maurer, 2012) emphasizes that creative industries are increasingly recognized as an economic sector that allows individuals with diverse abilities to participate in productive activities by utilizing their creativity and innovative capacities.

Similarly, another study explains that empowering disabled communities through creative economic activities can foster self-confidence, independence, and social inclusion while also providing economic benefits for marginalized groups.

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Previous studies also emphasize that the success of disability empowerment programs depends on the involvement of various stakeholders such as government institutions, community organizations, and the private sector. (Wang, 2023) found that collaboration between local government, community institutions, and private organizations plays a critical role in strengthening empowerment programs for persons with disabilities. Likewise (Chumo et al., 2023) argues that empowerment initiatives are more effective when communities receive institutional support, access to resources, and opportunities to participate in development processes. In addition, (Alsop et al., 2005) highlight that institutional frameworks and stakeholder collaboration are essential for ensuring sustainable empowerment and expanding economic opportunities for marginalized groups.

Similarly, a study on disability empowerment models in the creative industry explains that collaboration between stakeholders is necessary to build sustainable empowerment models and ensure that persons with disabilities can achieve economic independence.

Implications of the Creative Economic Empowerment Model

The empowerment model implemented in Karangpatihan Village demonstrates that community-based creative economy programs can become an effective approach to improving the welfare of persons with disabilities. Through training, mentoring, and institutional support, persons with disabilities are able to participate in productive economic activities and gradually develop economic independence.

These findings support the argument that creative economy-based empowerment can strengthen community capacity and promote inclusive development. (Gold & Revill, 2004) argues that development should focus on expanding people's capabilities and opportunities to participate in economic and social activities. In addition, (Oliver, 1990) highlights that social innovation and community-based initiatives can create new economic opportunities for marginalized communities. Furthermore, (Ortiz-García & Capitán, 2025) explains that livelihood diversification, including creative and small-scale economic activities, can improve the resilience and economic sustainability of rural communities.

Based on the findings of this study, a creative economic empowerment model for persons with disabilities is proposed. The model emphasizes the role of local institutions, stakeholder collaboration, skill development, and creative economic activities in supporting the economic participation of persons with disabilities. Through continuous mentoring and institutional support, persons with disabilities can

gradually develop productive economic activities that contribute to sustainable economic independence and improved community welfare. The proposed model is illustrated in Figure 2.

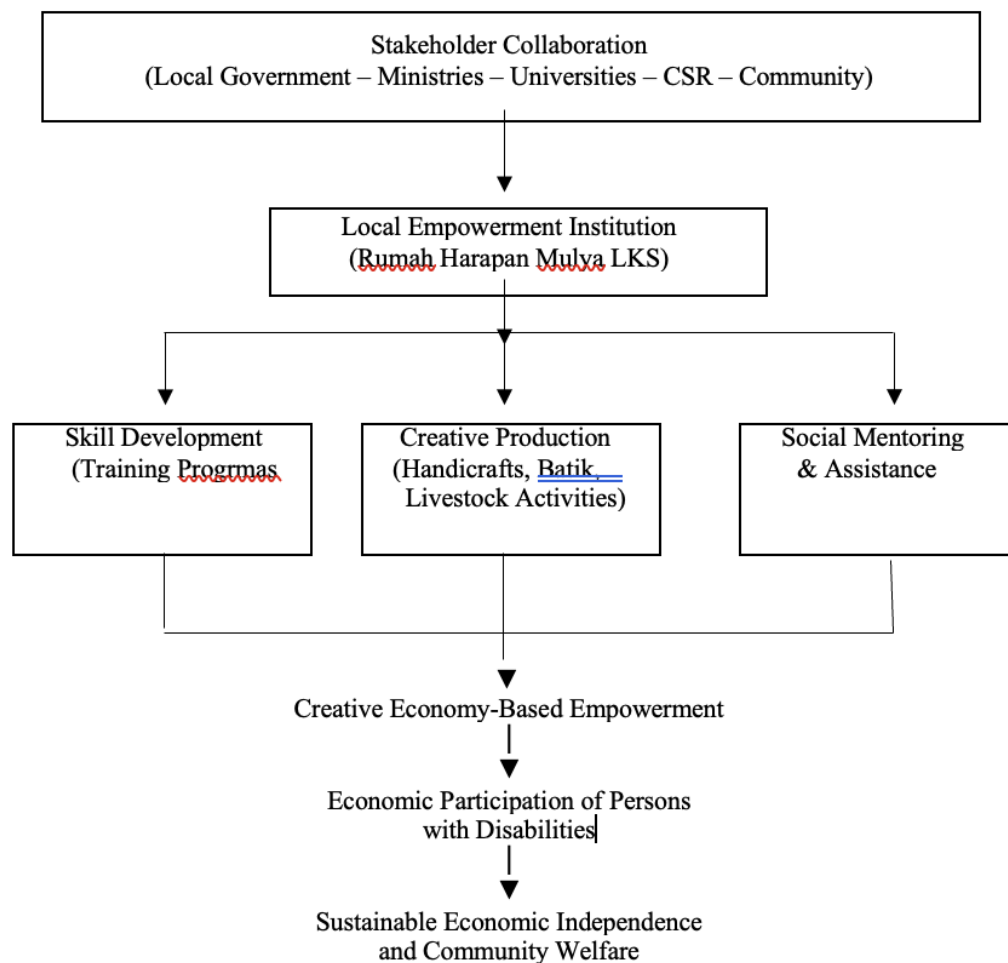


Figure 2. Proposed creative economic empowerment model for persons with disabilities based on community and creative economy approaches.

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the research question: How is a creative economic empowerment model for persons with disabilities structured and implemented in rural contexts, and what institutional and collaborative mechanisms contribute to its sustainability? The findings show that the empowerment process is implemented through the Social Welfare Institution (LKS) Rumah Harapan Mulya, which serves as the central institutional platform in organizing training, mentoring, and productive economic activities for persons with intellectual disabilities. The empowerment programs are structured into three main economic activities: daily income programs through handicraft production such as doormats, prayer beads, and splash batik; monthly income programs through livestock and agricultural activities; and annual income programs through goat farming. These activities are sustained by adaptive skill training, government support through the “Rumah Kasih Sayang” program, and multi-channel marketing strategies. Collectively, these components form a Creative Inclusive Empowerment Model

that enables persons with disabilities to participate in productive economic activities and gradually achieve economic independence.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature on community empowerment and creative economy by proposing a creative economic empowerment model that integrates institutional support, skill development, creative production, and stakeholder collaboration. The model highlights the important role of local institutions in facilitating empowerment processes and connecting marginalized groups with economic opportunities. This finding is consistent with empowerment theory which emphasizes the importance of institutional support and capacity building in enabling marginalized communities to improve their economic conditions (Zimmerman, 2000). As illustrated in Figure 2, the empowerment process involves collaboration between local government, community institutions, universities, and other stakeholders to support sustainable economic participation for persons with disabilities. In terms of practical implications, the findings suggest that creative economy-based empowerment programs can become an effective strategy for improving the welfare and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities, particularly in rural areas. Local governments and community organizations can adopt similar approaches by establishing institutional platforms that provide training, mentoring, and marketing support for creative products produced by persons with disabilities. Strengthening collaboration among stakeholders is also essential to ensure the sustainability of empowerment initiatives and expand market access for creative products.

However, this study has several limitations. The research focuses on a specific village context and primarily examines persons with intellectual disabilities, which may limit the generalization of the findings to other regions or types of disabilities. Future research is therefore encouraged to explore comparative studies across different regions, include other categories of disabilities, and incorporate quantitative approaches to measure the economic impact of empowerment programs more comprehensively. Such studies could further develop inclusive economic empowerment models that support sustainable development and social inclusion.

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