

PORTRAYALS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN INDONESIAN NEWSPRINT MEDIA (A CASE STUDY ON THREE INDONESIAN MAJOR NEWSPAPERS)

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Abstract: *This article examines portrayals of people with disabilities in three Indonesian major newspapers (the web versions). The portrayals of people with disabilities in these newspapers are examined in terms of positive, negative or neutral tones (Clogston 1989, 1992). To determine the tones, the analysis is focussed on the qualitative content analysis of the articles. Overall, this article argues that portrayals of people with disabilities in Indonesian news print media may lead to positive or stereotypical view of society in looking at people with disabilities. The analysis of eleven stories from the Indonesian newspapers indicates that news on people with disabilities has yet to receive a priority for coverage. News on people with disabilities usually just appear in coincidence with the International Day of People with Disabilities on 3 December which is also in small number. Most of the stories analysed contain negative language which focuses on the impairments rather than the people. In fact, such negative portrayal can be avoided when the journalists have proper training and unprejudiced approach to disability issues.*

Keywords: media, newspapers, persons with disabilities, portrayal, positive, negative, neutral, tones

1. Introduction

Mass media play a significant role in the lives of people. The media serve as mirrors of society and reflect what we believe to be norms and values which also act as a kind of prism through which we interpret our surroundings or everything around us (Disability Resource and Development 2009). Media content frequently reflects widespread norms and values as well as provides information to the general public which in turn will help engender public attitudes (Gold and Auslander 1999).

Mass media are also vital outlets for the society to foster public dialogue through education initiatives and to consider alternative ways of looking at and engaging with certain minorities such as people with disabilities (McQuail 2000). In other words, the media influence and shape public opinion either in positive or negative way.

In the negative side, the media could be a potent instrument to maintain prejudices and clichés towards those living with disabilities whereas, in the positive side, mass media may influence public opinion towards accepting the social diversity (Disability Resource and Development 2009).

The portrayal of people with disabilities in the media are, more often than not, clichéd, stereotyped and archetypal. It is not really disability imagery but that of impairment where disability is seen as the impairment almost devoid of political importance in the social system. Impairment imagery flourishes in various media forms such as television, film, radio and prints (Barnes 1991).

Roper (in Media Awareness Network 2010) argues that not only are people with disabilities stereotyped, the full range of disabilities is not reflected in media portrayals.

‘Wheelchairs tend to predominate... since they are an iconic sign of disability. Most actors playing disabled characters are, however, not disabled. The wheelchair allows the character to

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be obviously disabled, whilst still looking 'normal', and does not therefore present any major challenges for audience identification.' (Media Awareness Network 2010)

It shows that the influence that the media produces on society has not always benefitted the society particularly corresponding to disability. The media has helped to contribute to add to the discrimination of people with disabilities (Disability Planet 2006).

Indonesia, as one of the developing countries, with 249 million people and a myriad of demanding problems to solve might show a similar situation or even a worse picture. During the reform age, Indonesians have mostly embraced the democratic process in which the number of printed publications has increased significantly. However, people with disabilities in Indonesia remain either slightly noticed or even unnoticed in media coverage. News on people with disabilities usually just appears in coincidence with the International Day of People with Disabilities on 3 December. Some journalists are even reluctant to cover activities of people with disabilities (Ariani in *Tangerang Raya News* 2009).

Attitudes of community to persons with disabilities were noticeably reflected in the Indonesian newspaper *Suara Merdeka* in 2002. The article reported about the death of a man with an intellectual disability who had been placed in stocks like a prisoner at the back of his parents' home in *Cilacap*, Java. The article seemed to support what the family had done. Even it said that the man was imprisoned in that way to prevent him from harming himself and other people as well as to give his parents some relief from looking after him (Byrne 2009).

This example shows that people with disabilities in Indonesia are more often considered as an embarrassment. They are not considered valuable members of their community and many remain housebound, uneducated and unskilled (Byrne 2009).

2. Methods of The Research

This study analyses eleven disability related articles from the *Kompas* daily newspapers, the *Koran TEMPO* daily newspapers and the *Jakarta Post* daily newspapers. The articles were collected using the purposive sampling method. The articles taken were only those related to disability issues or persons with disabilities. They are six stories in

Indonesian language from the *Kompas* daily newspapers and the *Koran TEMPO* daily newspapers and five stories in English from the *Jakarta Post* daily newspapers. Most of them are news feature stories published between December 2010 and January 2011. This period was chosen because the stories on people with disabilities normally appear within that specific period of time which coincides with International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December. The data were collected from 25 February to 5 March 2011 from the e-paper edition of each newspaper.

The portrayals of people with disabilities in these newspapers are examined in terms of positive, negative or neutral tones (Clogston 1989, 1992). To determine the tones, the analysis is focussed on the qualitative content analysis of the articles such as the topic (progressive or traditional focus), visual illustrations, attributes or references used to refer to people with disabilities, whether they created awareness or stigma for people with disabilities, the use of derogatory or questionable terminology, and whether they present positive or negative outlook for people with disabilities (Clogston 1989, 1992). Finally, this article will also summarise a guideline for reporting on people with disabilities.

Overall, this article argues that portrayals of people with disabilities in Indonesian news print media may lead to positive or stereotypical view of society in looking at people with disabilities. Judging from how most Indonesians perceive disability, negative portrayals of people with disabilities could be prevalent within Indonesian news print media.

3. Results & Analysis

3.1. Perspectives on Disability

Disability is created in various forms and proportions in different cultures (Oliver 1996). How a culture views disability also depends on such factors as religion and capitalism. For example, some religions might see epilepsy as a divine possession and therefore a gift, whereas in capitalist societies with adequate and powerful cure, disability is considered as evidence of the medicine's failure and is thus treated negatively (Roper 1998).

Throughout history, people with disabilities were seen as incapable and child-like in their capacity for decision-making and development (Tennant 1996). Prior to Enlightenment in Europe,

families and the church provided care and asylum focussing on provision of basic physical needs such as food, shelter and clothing. Social attitudes of that time used stereotypes and harmful characterisation prominently (Tennant 1996).

Stereotypes imply that people with disabilities are seen as a minority group in a culture. They are subject to discriminatory practices, segregation and prejudices. The fact that a person is disabled will colour all his activities and potentialities in the eyes of the able-bodied community pervasively that he will always be considered weak or inferior and incapable of doing anything. This is because people with disabilities tend to be judged more on the basis of their categorical membership in a society than their individual characteristics (Rothschild 1970).

However, fundamental changes happened in recent decades in which a growing awareness has developed to recognise the rights of people with disabilities (Nelson 2000:180). A better way in looking at people with disabilities also appeared. This is called social model of disability. This model perceives that impairment (the concrete physical or mental state) and disability (the socio-cultural construct) are two distinct things. It views that impairments are not inherently disabling, but that disability is created by society which fails to accommodate people with disabilities and puts obstacles in their way. For example, the built environment that does not allow access for people with mobility problems or discriminatory attitudes in the form of such idea that disability is a personal tragedy for the word 'sufferer' impinges upon people with disabilities in various negative ways (Roper 2003).

Nevertheless, stereotypes will not be gone easily. Sensitivity to the use of disability-related terminology remains an issue as seen in such terminologies as 'handicap' and 'mentally handicapped.' Besides, there remains a perception that disability is a human defect, as seen in the frequent use of the terminology in some instances in such developing country as Indonesia (JICA 2002). Such stereotyping of people with disabilities might be more apparent when it comes to media.

3.2. People with Disabilities and Media

The ways people with disabilities are perceived by the society might be reflected in media. There has been a growing number of research on media and disability. In Australia, for instance, disability

is now recognised as a legitimate field of research in media, communications and cultural studies (Goggin 2009).

It can be said that the media have a huge responsibility for the persistence of disabling imagery. For example, in Britain, the British media presented a distorted perception of people with disabilities to the general public. This did not only undervalue the role of people with disabilities in society but also maintain the primordial prejudices and fears about impairment (Barnes 1991). In other words, the media are influential in building and maintaining public attitudes although sometimes in a disadvantageous way (Nelson 2000:183).

Nelson (2000:183) furthermore argues that the media have been instrumental in building a sense of identity among people with disabilities. He identifies the Four Stages of the evolving sense of community among those with disabilities in relation to the media:

'Stage 1 - Dark Ages of Disability. Often, with the support of the media, those who were in some ways physically or mentally different were scorned, shunned, and made to feel invisible, or-at best-inadequate. There was little sense of community beyond what a sympathetic family might offer.

'Stage 2 - Awareness of Rights. Following WW II, thousands of returning disabled veterans were seen as heroes, and a notion grew that the rights of individuals needed to be protected in a civilised society.

'Stage 3 - Mobilisation to Action. The growing sense emerged among those with disabilities that they had rights, that they were part of a larger group, and that they could wield power if they became unified. The media was central to this realisation. And press coverage of such things as sit-ins gave these moves a steam-rolling motion. The result was the Americans with Disabilities Act enacted in 1990 to guarantee equal rights as far as possible.

'Stage 4 - Revolution of Technological Community. In the 1990s the exponential growth technological advances, the electronic media, and most especially the Internet accelerated the building of community among those with disabilities' (Nelson 2000:182).

The media throughout history has portrayed disability through the use of impairment. The media usually depicts impairment through the influence of medical model of disability in which the problems that people with disabilities' experience in their day to day activities are directly caused by their physical and/or mental impairment (Disability Planet 2006). For example, content analyses have revealed that less than 2 percent of the characters on prime-time television programs portray a disability. Until recently, such stereotyping shows a few major characters in the media whose disabilities became the story focus. On the other hand, people with disabilities have rarely been cast in supporting roles or in those in which their disabilities are secondary to the lives of the characters they play. Furthermore, characters with disabilities on television programs or in the movies are more frequently portrayed as having failed personal and professional relationships (Farnall 1999: 660).

Such stereotyped views on people with disabilities are originally based on myths and beliefs inherited from the past. However, they remain in existence in the culture because they are repeatedly reproduced through TV, radio, films, advertisements and newspapers (Barnes 1991). In his article, Paul Hunt (in Disability Planet 2006) identifies 10 stereotypes that the media frequently use to portray people with disabilities:

1. People with disabilities as pitiable or pathetic
2. An object of curiosity or violence
3. Sinister or evil
4. The super cripple
5. As atmosphere
6. Laughable
7. His/her own worst enemy
8. As a burden
9. As Non-sexual
10. Being unable to participate in daily life (Disability Planet 2006).

Nonetheless, since the mid 1970s, there has been numerous campaigns from the community of people with disabilities for recognition of their equal rights to able-bodied people as well as the fact that it is societies that actually contribute to creating disabling environments. The call for adopting the social model of disability has witnessed immense

improvements to establishing the human rights of people with disabilities and the same progress is seen in legislation as well. Yet, seemingly the media have been quite slow to take on the changes and, more often than not, they rarely put what they preach into practice. The media has continued to inflict disability stereotypes portraying people with disabilities in a negative and demeaning way (Disability Planet 2006).

What the media present to us is often decided and influenced by a small group of decision makers. They are editors, producers, programmers and budget-controllers who are affected by their own opinions of disability and what they believe will attract more audiences. They may think that portraying people with disabilities outside of the stereotypes which have sold well previously will make them take a risk (Disability Planet 2006). Such a case also applies to the media, particularly newsprint media, in Indonesia. The following section will analyse how people with disabilities are portrayed in Indonesian newspapers.

3.3. Portrayals of People with Disabilities in Indonesian Newspapers (A Case Study)

A great number of research has revealed that both the entertainment and news media considerably affect both positive and negative stereotyping of people with disabilities. The prominent one is depicting a person with a disability as victim. The person with a disability who, against all odds, is triumphant in his or her career and achievements is another common representation in the media. Another common media portrayal could be a disabled person who criticises society because of disabling circumstances. Depicting people with disabilities as a burden on friends, families or societies is also common in the media (Farnall 1999 : 660).

How are people with disabilities portrayed in Indonesian news media? This section will analyse eleven articles from three Indonesian newspapers: The *Kompas* daily newspapers was established by Chinese and Javanese journalists in 1965. This newspaper has the biggest circulation in Indonesia currently. Between December and January 2010, The *Kompas* published five stories on people with disabilities or disability issues.

The first story of the *Kompas* is 'Ketika Penyandang Cacat Unjuk Karya' (When disabled persons showcase their work, *Kompas*, 4

December 2010). This news feature story portrays a few persons with physical disabilities who manage to live independently under the rehabilitation of *Yayasan Bina Karya Tiara*. It is a not-for-profit organisation that provides training and work to people with disabilities. This article describes the activities of people with disabilities working for the organisation whose impairments do not become a problem for them in producing quality handicrafts. In terms of topic, this story has a progressive focus because it also brings up the issues of discrimination and awareness (Clogston 1989, 1992). For example, in spite of the existing government regulation that requires companies to employ people with disabilities at least one percent of their total number of employees, many of them are denied their right to work. This article also calls for readers to pay more attention to empowering people with disabilities. However, this story has no visual materials. In terms of the attributes assigned to the persons with disabilities, this article attributes humanistic qualities (in this story, name and gender) to the characters portrayed. Judging from the language used including references and terminology, this story does not use derogatory or questionable terminology in the content. It uses the term '*difabel*' to refer to persons with disabilities. It is a loan term from English and is the acronym of 'differently abled.' *Difabel* is a term introduced by a group of Indonesian disability activists in the mid of 1999 to replace the word '*cacat*' which has a negative connotation. However, quite strangely, this story still uses the devaluing term *cacat* in its caption. *Cacat* is literally translated into 'defective or broken' in English. On the whole, this story can be categorised into a positive article because it has a progressive topic, positive attributes to people with disabilities and portrays disability positively.

The second story on disability published by the *Kompas* is '*Kesetaraan untuk Mereka*' (Equality for them, *Kompas*, 6 December 2010). It has no visual materials just like the previous story. On one hand, this news feature story still brings up the issues of discrimination and equality for people with disabilities. For example, this story describes how people with disabilities in Bandung staged a demonstration to claim for their rights for equal access. On the other hand, this story also focuses too much on the disability instead of the person. It describes how *Ujang Tio Lesmana*, a 24 year-old man with visual impairment who joined the

demonstration, had a lot of problems in walking along with other participants. He frequently stumbled upon the unfamiliar pavements and hurt his legs. This has shown how difficult the life of a person with visual impairment is. Thus this story seems to combine progressive and traditional focus. In terms of the references used, this article also combines the term '*difabel*' and '*cacat*.' Overall, this story is categorised as neutral because this article cannot be said positive or negative, which is a mix of progressive and traditional focus. It merely states the facts (news) as it happened. It does not influence the readers' perspective on disability issues (Clogston 1989, 1992).

The third story of the *Kompas* is '*Pemerintah tidak peduli penyandang cacat*' (Government closes the eyes to disabled people, *Kompas*, 15 December 2010). This story has a photo showing a group of people with disabilities who play a Lego like game together. It seems to portray and liken people with disabilities to children. This is one of the common archetypes in how people with disabilities are viewed throughout history (Cocks and Stehlick 1996). This photo is completely irrelevant to the story which describes lack of government support for people with disabilities in employment sector. This article seems to have a traditional topic because it talks about special attention that needs to give to people with disabilities by focussing on the disability, special employment, charity or government support (Clogston 1989, 1992). In terms of the references used, this story always uses the stigmatising term '*penyandang cacat*' to refer to people with disabilities. The journalist also makes comparison between people with disabilities and the able bodied people using the word 'normal.' It implies that people with disabilities are not normal. The photo caption also contains medical terminology such as '*pasien*' (patient) which is not in hospital context. This is a negative view of people with disabilities as it represents them as people with illnesses or diseases (Cocks and Stehlick 1996). In light of the above, the article can be categorised to have negative tone.

The fourth story published by the *Kompas* is '*112 Penyandang cacat akan terima Jamsos*' (112 disabled people to receive monthly social security, *Kompas*, 15 December 2010). This news story has a photo to illustrate the story. However, it is the same photo used in the previous story. The photo shows a group of people with disabilities playing a

Lego like game together. Again there is no relevance to the story. This story talks about the increasing number of people with severe disabilities in Indonesia to receive monthly allowance which amounts at less than AUD 50. It is obvious that this story has a traditional focus because it portrays people with disabilities as an object of pity or charity (Cocks and Stehlick 1996). It is reflected by one of the statements in the story '*Bantuan bagi penyandang cacat berat ini digunakan untuk mencukupi kebutuhan sehari-hari seperti makan, minum dan biaya pengobatan*' (this allowance is intended to help disabled people meeting their daily needs such as foods and medications). This story portrays that people with disabilities cannot support themselves and need help desperately. People with disabilities are always referred as '*penyandang cacat*' which is a devaluing term. Therefore, this story portrays people with disabilities negatively.

The last story on disability published by the *Kompas* is '*Raperda Penyandang Cacat Ditunda*' (Local bill of people with disabilities adjourned, *Kompas*, 31 January 2011). This story has a photo showing a 40 year-old woman on her wheelchair being carried by three men to board a bus because there is no ramp or other accesses. This illustration fits the story because it shows that it is inaccessibility that causes disability. The story talks about Jakarta local government's decision to adjourn the bill on equal access for people with disabilities because there are numerous other important bills in line. This article has a progressive focus because it sees disability problems as located in the failure of society and government to accommodate all members of community (Clogston 1989, 1992). In terms of the references used, however, this story uses the stigmatising term '*penyandang cacat*' to refer to people with disabilities. Overall, this story is categorised as neutral because it cannot be declared positive or negative. It merely states the facts (news) as it happened. It does not sway the readers' perspective on disability issues (Clogston 1989, 1992).

The other Indonesian major newspaper that published a story on disability between December 2010 and January 2011 is the *Koran TEMPO* daily newspapers. This newspaper only has one story on disability during that period of time which is '*Penyandang Cacat Unjuk Rasa di Depan Istana*' (Disabled people held protest at the presidential

palace, *Koran TEMPO*, 3 December 2010). This story has no visual materials. This news feature story brings up the issues of discrimination and equality for people with disabilities. It describes how a group of disability activists staged a demonstration to protest President Yudhoyono to demand for equal access and better life for people with disabilities. This is a progressive focus. However, in terms of the references used, this articles still uses the devaluing term '*cacat*.' On the whole, this story is categorised as neutral because it only states the facts as it happened; it does not influence the readers' perspective on disability issues (Clogston 1989, 1992).

The other newspaper from which stories on disability are analysed is *the Jakarta Post*. The *Jakarta Post* is one of the three English-language newspapers published in Indonesia with the largest circulation. It was founded in 1983. There are five stories on disability to analyse from this newspaper. The first story of the *Jakarta Post* is '*Disabled children still treated unfairly*' (The *Jakarta Post*, 4 December 2010). This news story has a progressive focus because it creates awareness for inclusive education for children with disabilities. Yet, it does not have any visual materials. In terms of the references used, the headline of this story uses a disability-person reference or disability before the person as in '*disabled children*.' However, the content uses person-disability reference or refers to an individual's humanity before their disability. Thus this article is positive in general because it attempts to influence the readers' perception on people with disabilities (Clogston 1989, 1992).

The second story of the *Jakarta Post* is '*Malls are getting friendly to disabled people*' (The *Jakarta Post*, 10 December 2010). This news feature story is almost similar to the previous story. It has no visual materials but it has a progressive topic which focuses on access issues. This article describes that a few shopping malls in Jakarta have provided accessible facilities for people with disabilities such as parking lot, ramps, special toilets and elevators. As for the disability references, the positive person-disability references are used in the entire story such as '*people with disabilities, people with physical challenge, people with visual problems*.' However, the headline still uses disability-person reference as in '*disabled people*.' Just like the previous story, it is categorised into a positive article.

The third story of the Jakarta Post is 'Blind women show off their cooking skills' (The Jakarta Post, 7 January 2011). This feature story does not have any visual materials either. The headline obviously shows the use of a negative attribute assigned to people with disabilities. The word 'blind' only refers people with disabilities in terms of their limitation. The same disability-person term is also found in the content as in 'disabled women.' Such referring creates a tunnelled vision of disability as a whole (Clogston 1989, 1992). In terms of focus or topic, however, this story has a progressive topic as it shows how people with visual impairment could lead an independent life. It describes a group of women with visual impairment who demonstrated their cooking expertise at a culinary festival in Bali. Overall, this story is categorised as neutral because it cannot be declared positive or negative. It merely states the facts (news) as it happened. It does not affect the readers' perspective on disability issues (Clogston 1989, 1992).

The fourth story of the Jakarta Post is 'Crippled versus the corrupt' (The Jakarta Post, 23 January 2011). This feature story is a kind of satirical protest to government's unfair treatment towards people with disabilities. It compares a person with disability who works hard to make ends meet and a corruptor who embezzles people's money but still ends up with special treatment from the government. This article has a traditional focus as it considers the person with a disability as dysfunctional and it is a victimisation of people with disabilities. For example, 'as his left foot twisted hard at an awful angle, the beggar limped to my car.. the young man, crippled maybe since birth, maybe in a motor bike crash, was foraging for his daily rice on the *Ngurah Rai* Bypass in Sanur, Bali.' These sentences use derogatory terms such as twisted, limped, foraging and crippled which imply that a disability is socially devaluing or a source of pity. For that reason, this article is categorized as negative in its portrayal of people with disabilities.

The last story of the Jakarta Post is 'Foundation aids Bali's disabled people' (The Jakarta Post, 26 January 2011). This feature story obviously has a traditional focus. It describes poor condition of people with disabilities in Bali. They are isolated from the outside world due to their disabilities. For example, two disabled girls were kept hidden out of shame by their mother that

nobody in the neighbourhoods know them. A foundation called *Senang Hati* attempts to help them. In other words, this article tells about special attention paid to a person with a disability focusing on the disability which makes it have a traditional focus (Clogston 1989, 1992). In terms of the references used, this story uses disability-person reference such as 'disabled children.' Overall, this story is categorised to have a negative tone in its portrayal of people with disabilities.

To sum up, there are only three stories that present positive outlook for people with disabilities. The remaining stories are either negative or neutral. When it comes to the terminology or references used, almost all articles use disability-person references which focus more on the disability than the person. What does it all mean? This will be discussed further in the following section.

3.4. Discussion and Guidelines for Reporting on People with Disabilities

The analysis of eleven stories from Indonesian newspapers above indicates that news on people with disabilities has yet to receive a priority for coverage. News on people with disabilities usually just appear in coincidence with the International Day of People with Disabilities on 3 December which is also in small number. Most of the stories analysed contain negative language which focuses on the impairments rather than the people such as defective, disabled, crippled, limped, blind and others. In fact, such negative portrayal can be avoided when the journalists have proper training and unprejudiced approach to disability issues (Disability Resource and Development 2009).

The extent of news coverage on disability issues relates to the process of deciding what should get covered, what makes news, and how. Journalists, more often than not, think that an important story should be something that is obviously or evidently newsworthy (Ericsons 1987). It means that disability issues might not be as interesting as corruption cases or alike when the journalists have to choose which of these two to cover. When it comes to labelling something considered as deviance, journalists tend to use normative judgements. They act like 'a surrogate judge of deviance for their audience members' (Shoemaker 1987).

In relation to stories on disability, journalists will present disability issues in a positive or

negative light which depends on their normative judgments because, with time being the essence, they generally avoid documents or complicated reading materials (Ericson et al. 1987). This also relates to the fact that newspapers are commercial enterprises and journalists frequently work based on the so-called ‘sphere of consensus’ (Schudson 2003). In other words, the journalists should anticipate what their readers are interested in reading about. However, it is also their professional obligation to contribute to positive social change and to avoid prejudices (Schudson 2003).

Therefore, it is of great importance for journalists to be knowledgeable on the issues they cover, particularly the complex disability issues, and how to approach it. When the journalists are preparing a news story or a program that involves people with disabilities, they need to present them as individuals and not as people typified by their disabilities. All aspects of their lives should be portrayed, not only those related to their disabilities because one is not supposed to be defined by ability or disability (Sidoti 1998). The language used in portraying people with disabilities also matters. The choice of language will affect how people with disabilities feel and are perceived in society. Disrespectful language may hurt and exclude them. It can be a barrier to their full participation in society as well. People with disabilities deserve respect and acceptance. Thus ethical journalists should understand this and learn to use respectful language (People with Disability 2009).

This is reflected in four questions that journalists need to ask themselves before portraying people with disabilities in their piece (Sidoti 1998):

- 1) *‘Does the portrayal patronise?’* No one is incapable of being a person, whatever aspect of his or her life is affected by disability. People with disability live full, active, normal lives. They are not objects deserving pity or sports stars heroically conquering adversity. At least most of them are not. Yet almost all media portrayals fall into one or other of these two categories. Both are patronising.
- 2) *‘Does the portrayal victimise?’* Throughout history people with disabilities have been presented as victims of fate. They are still presented that way. These representations

reinforce their dependent status. They are victimising.

- 3) *‘Does the portrayal demonise?’* Everyone is familiar with the villain who has a limp or a scar or is in some way not "normal". Describing people we identify as "other", as not just different from us but actually bad, is perhaps the most common way of putting people outside the community and keeping them there.
- 4) *‘Does the portrayal normalise?’* Community life is the accepted goal of and for people with disabilities, not isolation, dependence and rejection and not pity or hero status. The representation of people with disabilities as normal people in normal situations is all they ask for. The media have an important responsibility to portray the reality of people's lives, not some imagined reality. In this way they can reflect the changes that have occurred and continue to occur in our society. And they can encourage further change’ (Sidoti 1998).

Having reflected on the questions above, the journalists should refer to some ways that describe people with disabilities. However, the journalists should always remember that what is acceptable for some people might be not for others. ‘If you have no idea of what to say, just ask how a person likes to be described’ (People with Disability 2009). The following is the list of words to refer to people with disabilities appropriately:

Impairment	Out-Dated Language	Respectful Language
Blind or Vision Impairment	Dumb, Invalid, Blind Freddy	Blind/Vision Impaired; Person who is blind; Person with vision impairment
Deaf or Hearing Impairment	Invalid, Deaf-and-Dumb, Deaf-Mute	Deaf or hearing impaired, Deaf person; Person with hearing impairment
Speech/Communication Impairment	Dumb, "One who talks bad"	Person with a speech / communication impairment, Speech impaired
Learning Disability	Retarded, Slow, Brain-Damaged, "Special ed"	Learning disability, Cognitive disability, Person with a learning or cognitive disability
Mental Illness	Hyper-	Person with a

	sensitive, Psycho, Crazy, Insane, Wacko, Nuts, Mad	psychosocial disability; Person with psychiatric disability, Person with mental illness
Mobility/Physical Disability	Handicapped, Physically Challenged, "Special," Deformed, Cripple, Gimp, Spastic, Spaz, Wheelchair-bound, Lame	Wheelchair user, Person with mobility or physical disability
Intellectual/ Cognitive Disability	Retard, Mentally retarded, "Special ed"	Person with an intellectual/ cognitive/developmental disability
Short Stature	Dwarf, Midget	Person of short stature
Health Conditions	Victim, Someone "stricken with" a disability (i.e. "someone stricken with cancer" or "an AIDS victim")	Someone "living with" a specific health condition (i.e. "someone living with cancer or AIDS")

(People with Disability 2009)

Interviewing a talent is another important aspect that journalists should consider before writing a story on disability issues. The approach employed to interview a talent with a disability is definitely different from the technique used for regular persons. National Centre on Disability and Journalism (2011) has provided some tips for interviewing people with disabilities:

‘Before the Interview

- a) Ask the interviewee if he or she requires any specific accommodation such as wheelchair access, a quiet place in which to be interviewed, an interpreter and many others. If you are unsure about how to provide the accommodation, ask the interviewee.
- b) Allow plenty of time for the interview. Some will require additional time.’

‘Setting up the Interview

- a) Place yourself and the camera (if applicable) at interviewee’s eye level.
- b) If the interview will take place on a platform and the interviewee has a physical disability, be sure there is proper physical access to the interviewing area.’

‘During the interview

- a) When interviewing a person with disability, speak directly to that person and maintain eye contact rather than interacting directly with an interpreter or companion.
- b) Use the same interviewing techniques and manner that you usually do. Speak in relaxed, everyday tones.’
- c) When talking with a person with a hearing loss, be sure to face them and do not cover your mouth when you speak. Place yourself so that you face the light source and are not backlit. Wait to speak until the person is looking at you.
- d) When meeting an interviewee who has a visual impairment, identify yourself and others who are with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
- e) Listen attentively when you are talking with a person who has difficulty speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish speaking rather than correcting them or speaking for them. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you believe was said and allow the person to respond.
- f) When covering an event where a sign or oral interpreter is present, be aware of the communication between an interpreter or real-time captioner and the person using the service. Avoid walking between them or blocking their communication. Often people who use interpreters are located near

the front of a room in a designated section. Remember, blocking this communication is like pulling the plug on the public address system.'

'Other suggestions

- a) Focus on the *person* you are interviewing, not the disability.
- b) Shake hands when greeting a person with a disability. People with prosthetics or limited hand motion usually shake hands.
- c) If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen or ask for instructions on how to proceed.
- d) A wheelchair or other assistive device is part of the person's body space. Do not lean or hang on a person's wheelchair.'
- e) Service animals and guide dogs are working. Do not make eye contact, praise, talk or pet the animal as it is distracting for the animal and owner.'

(National Centre on Disability and Journalism 2011)

Paying attention to such guidelines for reporting on people with disabilities can help journalists to represent people with disabilities positively in newsprint media. As there is no a set of guidelines to cover every possible contingency, however, the journalists should always adopt the fundamental principle of positive representation of people with disabilities, that is putting the person before the disability.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of eleven articles on disability from three major Indonesian newspapers shows that people with disabilities are rarely portrayed in a positive outlook. Nearly all articles use disability-person references which focus on the disability rather than the person. This might reflect how Indonesian society generally looks at people with disabilities. People with disabilities in Indonesia are still generally considered as embarrassment or likened to the poor who needs financial help. It is here the crucial role that mass media should play in portraying disability issues in

a more positive light so as to change people's negative perception towards people with disabilities.

Another way to help portraying people with disabilities in a more positive light in mass media might be involving people with disabilities within the media industry itself. It could constitute as a large step towards removing stereotypes and empowering people with disabilities in the general community. Therefore, the media industry and the community of people with disabilities need to work together and to learn from one another in order to broaden and to deepen each other's mutual understanding (Disability Planet 2006).

This analysis of the representation of people with disabilities in Indonesian newsprint media is still very preliminary in nature. Further research with more valid methodologies and extensive data is required. However, this article has at least given important snapshots and ideas into the research on disability and media in Indonesia.

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