

Informal Norms and Work Environment Inclusiveness: A Study at PT. Think Smart Ide Brajendra, Jakarta

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ABSTRACT

Protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in the workplace is not enough just to apply formal rules made by the government but needs to be strengthened by various informal mechanisms. This research aims to examine the interrelation of informal norms as a component in supporting existing formal rules and their impact on inclusiveness in the work environment. Since 2016, the Indonesian government has a disability Law number 8 the year 2016 that regulates the fulfillment of rights and protection of work. The fact, the government still faces various challenges in its implementation. There is not much research that addresses directly the relationship between informal norms and works environment inclusiveness. Previous studies related to persons with disabilities and work environment highlighted three things, i.e. government's affirmative policy towards persons with disabilities, constraints of companies employing disabilities, as well as the impact of persons with disabilities on workplace diversity. Qualitative method is used, and data collection is obtained through observation, document, and in-depth interview. The result of the current study points out that strengthening informal norms has an impact on improving the leadership aspect of a company's leader and opening up communication space in the corporate environment. The effort is capable to increase environmental inclusiveness as well as eliminating social exclusion related to infrastructures and facilities that are not yet accessible for employees with disabilities.

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INTRODUCTION

The ILO notes that about 70% of people with disabilities in the world are working-age population (LPEM FEB UI, 2017). This prompted the United Nations to invite the government and

international institutions to include persons with disabilities in economic development (Irwanto, Kasim, Lusli, & Siradj, 2010). The support of international institutions to protect the rights of persons with disabilities was realized through the Convention of Right People with Disability in 2008. The ILO emphasized that persons with disabilities have the right to get decent work, accessibility in accessing work, protection at work, and various guarantees and equal treatment in place (Arthur, 2013). Various efforts in involving persons with disabilities in development are in line with the global agenda related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) with the slogan "No One Left behind". Among the types of disabilities, persons with visual impairments are the type of disability with the largest number in Southeast Asia which includes total blind and low vision. Data from the World Health Organization states that a total of 285 million or 4.24% of people with visual disabilities in the world, an estimated 27,913,000 are in Southeast Asia including Indonesia (World Health Organization, 2012). According to Ministry of Health (2003) there are around 900,000 people who were blind and more than 2 million were a low vision in Indonesia. Indonesia is the third most visually impaired country in the world.

On the other hand, the previous study found that persons with disabilities experienced social exclusion related to their right to work caused by stigma, inaccessible device, and infrastructure (Kaye, Jans, & Jones, 2011; O'Day, 1999; Rohman, 2019; Wolffe & Candela, 2002). The lack of understanding of how to treat them well also the fear of interacting with them reinforces the negative stigma of employers towards people with visual impairments (Douglas, 2013). The finding was confirmed by Pratiwi (2017) who found that the protection of the rights of workers with disabilities in private companies was not well realized. Lack of employer commitment, the difficulty of creating accessible work facilities, and the lack of government supervision have led to discrimination of persons with disabilities in the workplace. It can be illustrated that the phenomenon of persons with visual impairments and the right to work cannot be ignored. The importance of inclusiveness in the development agenda by involving persons with disabilities is in line with the motto of Indonesia "Unity in diversity". This is inseparable from a long history of discrimination against persons with disabilities in the past decade (Green, et al., 2005).

In practice, the Indonesian government has built a better understanding by ratifying the Convention on the Right of Persons with Disability (CRPD) through Law number 19 of 2011. In its development, the government has again ratified the latest Disability Act through Law number 9 of 2016. Article 6 of the law states that persons with disabilities have the right to obtain work held by local governments, or the private sector without discrimination. In addition, it was also stated that persons with disabilities, including vision, are entitled to have the opportunity to develop their career paths and all the normative rights. Article 53 requires private companies to employ persons with disabilities of at least 1% of the total number of employees and at least 2% for government agencies. This is reinforced by the finding of the Smeru Institute research that examines the obstacles to achieving inclusive development of disabilities. The result of the study explained that the majority of persons with disabilities, more than half (52.63%) opened their own businesses, and only 26.54% worked as laborers or formal employees where persons with disabilities had a great tendency to be rejected (Dewi et al., 2019).

On the other hand, the company as part of economic institutions not only contain formal rules but also contains informal norms that can influence institutional dynamics (Nee & Opper, 2012). Values, norms, and networks become important parts in economic activities that can determine

the pattern of personal relation and share of belief (Granovetter, 1983). Cohen et al., (1969) found that values and norms spreading in the company tend to be accompanied by increased opportunities to interact through available communication spaces. Thus, informal norms have the potential to reduce various discriminations experienced by persons with disabilities related to their rights to work and promote inclusiveness in a work environment. Furthermore, research by Hechavarria and Reynold (2009) found a relationship between norms, values, and the development of startup companies. The process of how informal norms work in realizing workplace inclusiveness in startup companies then becomes an important phenomenon to be investigated as startup companies continue to develop rapidly.

The latest data from the startup company registration site, startupranking.com, Indonesia has 2,079 startup companies and occupies the fifth position in the world. According to Indonesian Internet Providers Association (APJII) (2019), the number of internet user in Indonesia increased by 10 percent. The study shows that 171 million people were already connected to the internet in 2018. The data suggests that Indonesia is one of the biggest online activities even online markets worldwide. The rise of startup-based companies that incidentally utilize the internet as a major component, on the one hand, becomes a new job opportunity for people with disabilities. On the other hand, it is also a challenge for both persons with disabilities and companies in employing them. One of the digital startup agencies in Indonesia that have employed people with visual impairments is PT. Smart Ide Brajendra or commonly called PT. Thinkweb.

Digital agency companies generally help companies that have limitations in utilizing technology and the internet as well as helping their clients to be involved in specific target markets because they are supported by professionals. As one of the top five digital startup agencies in Indonesia, PT. Thinkweb currently handles large clients such as Bank Mandiri, Sariayu, Friskies, Travelin, Sangobion, Neurobion, Chitato, and Izzy. In addition to these clients, PT. Thinkweb has also handled other brands such as Toyota, ANZ Bank, DuaBelibis Chili Sauce, Le Minerale, Sony, Paddle Pop, Snacks, Pureit Unilever Indonesia, and many more (Think.web.id, 2019). A startup company with a simple (not complex) organizational structure can more easily make organizational arrangements, adjust rules, and the ability to determine informal norms as a corporate culture (James & Jones, 1976). The fact becomes an opportunity because the presence of persons with visual impairments in the company is more representative of minority rights that require affirmation and support of various accommodations (Robert & Harlan, 2016). At the same time, organizations are the players who respond to changes in relative prices (Nee, 2003)

Several studies address the issue of accommodation as a reason companies are reluctant to hire and provide opportunities to be able to develop their potential in other fields when they are already working (Douglas, 2013; Wolffe & Candela, 2002; Yang-Handy, 2013). But some experts find that informal communication continues to develop in ways that positively support structural change (Marschan et al., 1996). Therefore, it becomes an opportunity as well as a challenge in aligning the economic interests of the company and the rights of minority groups, in this case, persons with visual impairments. To understand more deeply related aspects that can support the inclusiveness in the workplace, this research explores how informal mechanisms work in promoting inclusiveness in the work environment.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Previous studies of persons with disabilities in the work environment can be categorized into three substances, including the implementation of the government's affirmative policy on persons with disabilities related to decent work, the constraints of companies employing disabilities, and their impact on the diversity of work environment (Anggorowati, 2017; O'Donnell, 2014; Goertz et al., 2019; Irwanto et al., 2010; Isneningtyas, 2016; Yang-Handy, 2013). The studies have not seen the process of integrating informal norms and values with formal rules through the communication spaces available in the company and their impact on workplace inclusiveness. In the new institutionalism economic sociology, institutions not only contain formal rules but also contain informal norms that can influence institutional dynamics (Nee & Oppen, 2012). Informal norms involve elements of habits, values, norms, and networks (Nee, 2003). These informal norms interact with formal rules in an institution (Achwan, 2014). The company as part of an economic institution becomes a social structure where the informal norms can function to fill the gaps of existing formal rules (Nee, 2003). Informal norms on a group, on the one hand, can be an obstacle if they are not well coordinated. On the other hand, informal norms can be an element of institutional change and give a maximum contribution to the institutional environments (Nee, 1998).

This mechanism is produced spontaneously through available communication channels and an interpersonal relationship that takes place within an institution. When groups and subgroups become larger and more numerous and relationships within and between them become more complex, there is a necessity to understand the communication process as well as the factors in the group structure that affect communication (Cohen et al., 1969). The opening of communication space within institutions as part of the public sphere avoids the distribution of power from public discourse that can produce exclusion and domination. This promotes social consensus and inclusion (Dahlberg, 2005). These alternative lines of communication can be used to establish the most effective and rational collaboration procedures (Cohen et al., 1969). This process confirms their knowledge about an object and fosters trust which only arises and is communicated by people who regularly interact (David, 1998). Besides, inclusiveness can be achieved by integrating formal procedures and informal communication networks with strong aspects of leadership (Ahmed, Z et al., 2010). This leadership aspect then becomes an important part of growing harmony between formal rules and informal norms.

This condition is seen through the enforcement process which is a strengthening of formal mechanisms (Nee & Oppen, 2012). Enforcement is a process in which the company as part of the institutional environment responds to various demands on institutional mechanisms at the macro level. In practice, this process takes the form of some affirmative policies to develop the capacity of certain workers or subgroups within the company. At the micro-level, a subgroup with informal norms will try to adjust (compliance) or be resistant to the condition. Informal norms that are intertwined with the company's formal norms will cause a "cross-coupling" condition that can produce various benefits for the institution (Nee, 2003). This framework will explain the process of transforming informal norms into formal rules and see whether it is an effort to encourage or inhibit inclusiveness in the work environment.

METHODS

This research is qualitative research with a case study approach at PT. Thinkweb Jakarta. This research examines the case of persons with visual impairment in the work environment. This case happened in contemporary life with various sources of information including interviews, various reports, and documents (Creswell, 2002). The company was chosen because it became one of the top five local digital agencies that it also has employed persons with visual impairments. This research aims to examine the interrelation of informal norms as a component in supporting existing formal rules and their impact on inclusiveness in the work environment. The informants of this study consisted of six people including the CEO of the company, three employees with visual disabilities, head of the digital activity division, and non-disabled employees. The CEO is a decision-maker of various company policies. To find out how various informal aspects can be integrated into the company environment, researchers chose non-disabled employees and section heads who were structurally the closest people to convey various regulations to employees with visual disabilities. Finally, employees with disabilities are chosen to know the impact of informal norms on their existence. Data collection is done by periodic observation, interviews, and documents. The observation was made using an observation guide in the form of a check-list table containing information about the research topic. The interview is done with a guided interview made by considering both the concepts used and the research topic. The interview data was collected when the informants enter break time and get permission from the company's leader.

After the data is collected, data analysis is carried out with several stages including data reduction, coding and categorizing themes, interpreting data, and the process ends with validation using triangulation techniques (Creswell, 2002). The data that has been collected is categorized into the following main themes including informal norms (values, norms, and networks), aspect of leadership, enforcement processes (learning opportunities in other fields and forming communication spaces), and inclusivity (social and physical). Each theme is given a code Q1-Q4 and sub code Q1a, Q1b, and so on. While the triangulation of data is done by cross checking the variation of data sources obtained from interviews, observations, and documents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Informal Norms and Its Implication in PT Thinkweb

As a start-up company, PT. Thinkweb has employees under one hundred. Constitutionally, this company has no obligation to recruit persons with disabilities. In the Disability Law number 8 of 2016, it is explained that private companies are required to employ persons with disabilities of at least 1% of the total number of employees. Responsibility toward regulation still there, however, the implementation can be postponed until the number of employees meets the minimum requirement. Job opportunities for persons with visual impairments in this company are an initiative of the company's CEO. Decision taken by a company leader is an important aspect of encouraging work participation for persons with disabilities. The company's leader has the authority to take various decisions, determine the direction of the company, and the power to intervene in various matters in the company. The role of an actor who has a strategic position (structural holes) is not only to establish various formal company rules but also to informal rules that can become social rules between employees.

The involvement of company leaders in social activities has an impact on the sustainability of the company they lead. CEO of PT. Thinkweb put forward: "I initially took part in volunteering

outside for typing braille, it turns out there are those who can computer, then I think why not try to recruit them in the company". For some people, technology for people with visual impairments is impossible before they see it directly. Therefore, the problem of persons with disabilities generally is a problem of minimal space to interact with one another. On the other hand, opening up spaces for interaction between persons with disabilities and non-disabilities encourages the actor who is strategically positioned to be involved in fulfilling the rights of persons with disabilities. This finding complements previous studies that found that networking is an important element that can be an obstacle as well as a driver of work participation rates for people with disabilities (Kulkarni & Lengnick-Hall, 2011).

One of the challenges is that companies do not want to recruit persons with disabilities because they feel scared and do not know how to interact with them appropriately. The experience of networking with communities is one of the motivating aspects at least to open space for persons with visual impairments to introduce themselves and show their potential. The existence of networks that gave rise to company initiatives in recruiting disabilities not only reduced social exclusion in the recruitment phase of the workplace but also minimized the possibility of social exclusion when they were already employed. The exchange of information in the network enables the company to have a better understanding of disability issues. As a result, PT. Thinkwebrecruits' people with visual impairments even though they have not yet met the requirements to employ persons with disabilities. This is evidence that informal norms have a significant role in fostering inclusiveness in the work environment. The value of inclusiveness obtained through networking with social organizations then reinforces the decisions taken. In this context, it is recruiting persons with visual impairments and trying to meet the required adaptive technology, even though it is not constitutionally obligated to employ persons with disabilities. The CEO of PT. Thinkweb said:

"I recruit people with visual impairments starting from social activities, getting to know people with visual impairments in blind partners, and often having discussions. From there I began to think that actually they only need space, we have been afraid because we never give space, so the fears accumulate and then become a kind of stereotype".

This finding shows that networks as a part of informal norms play a role in shaping the actor's rational action. Informal norms obtained through networking with the community make the CEO realized the importance of space for persons with visual impairments. In this context, networks have a role to open up opportunities for disability to obtain their right to work and able to reduce the stigma that has been inherent in persons with disabilities as well. In previous studies, stigma is one of the biggest obstacles for persons with disabilities in obtaining their rights, including the right to work (Bengisu et al., 2008; Coffey et al., 2014; O'Donnell, 2014; McDonnall et al., 2018; O'Day, 1999). The decision of the company leader in recruiting people with visual impairments and trying to accommodate their needs in the workplace is evidence of the existence of informal norms in a business organization. The presence of persons with visual impairments can be a stimulus for other companies to start recruiting people with visual impairments. The leadership aspect is needed not only to be able to open up employment opportunities but also to open a space of communication between disability and non-disability in a professional setting. The provision of space for people with disabilities can provide a new understanding for the community, especially companies that able to accommodate the potential of the disabilities.

People with visual disabilities at this company work as content writers. The assignment is in line with the expertise of the worker. Thus, the rational actions of corporate leaders who are influenced by values, norms, and networks then have an impact on how people with visual impairments are facilitated within the company environment. Previously, persons with visual impairments are well-known with the massage profession. In the companies, the majority of them were placed as a telephone operator (Rohman, 2019). Along with the rapid growth of the startup and online-based companies in Indonesia, fields related to information technology such as content writers have the potential to become a new type of job for persons with visual impairments. This was a condition, as the CEO of the company said: "hopefully, this could be a trigger for companies, especially digital-based, to start recruiting people with visual impairments". Informal mechanisms based on values, norms, and networks become an alternative to form a leadership aspect for an entrepreneur to encourage work participation for persons with visual impairments. In general, this finding fill in the blank of the framework of the new institutional economic sociology (Nee, 2003), which discusses the personal relationship that is formed between actors in the institutional environment, regardless of how the relationship formed has an impact on the leadership aspect of the actor in making a decision. The leadership aspect becomes the last element as a result of the accumulation of informal norms which then determines the actor's rational action. Furthermore, the leadership aspect is characterized by the ability of policymakers to have the leadership to develop the potential of workers with disabilities in the long run. These policies will be discussed in the next section.

This condition can be understood as an effort to form a culture that promotes the values of work inclusiveness at PT. Thinkweb. Structuring an inclusive culture into the formal rules of the company is a form of direct affirmation from the company. This effort has the nature of binding and accelerating the growth of informal norms in PT. Thingweb. In addition to the policy on a 1% quota for people with disabilities in private companies that have not been implemented, the rules regarding accommodation have also not been implemented properly. This finding complements previous studies that explored the implementation of disability policies (Anggorowati, 2017; Dewi et al., 2019; Isneningtyas, 2016) but did not explain how the company attempts to encourage inclusiveness in the work environment through the informal norms. This shows that informal norms can influence institutional dynamics. The drive to play a role in building work environment inclusiveness is precisely due to the existence of network, values, and leadership, not because of institutional pressures in the form of government policies.

Enforcement: Formalization of Informal Norms and the Creation of Communication Spaces

The leadership aspect owned by leaders began to be realized by strengthening the company's formal rules. These policies then provide a space for persons with visual impairment to further develop their potency. The effort to encourage an inclusive work environment by PT. Thinkweb is part of strengthening corporate policies through formalizing informal norms that have grown previously. This is called the "Enforcement" process. These rules include 10% of working hours required to participate in social activities and related policies 20% of total working hours to study other fields for all employees. Social activity that is part of the company's formal rules is the "BioskopBisik" program which is held once a month. BioskopBisik is an activity of watching together in the cinema with people with visual impairments. The aim is to socialize how they

enjoy films without seeing and to socialize what ordinary people should do when side by side with visual disabilities. The CEO of PT. Thinkweb put forward:

“That is the reason why the “BioskopBisik” was made. It was originally to provide more experience for the blind. But apparently, I found out that the main goal was to open a communication room. The real volunteers are persons with visual impairments and the ones who are assisted are nondisabled people. Nondisabled people are opened their minds to know what the blind world is like.”

Although it cannot provide all accessibility, PT. Thinkweb tries to open space so that workers are sensitive to social issues. Unwittingly, this has become the “New space” in changing the perspective that has been attached to lay people with disabilities in general. This policy can eliminate social exclusion related to the relational aspect of employees in the company. The company's social agenda is generally more voluntary, but the legality of a company that requires employees to participate in social activities is the key to how an institution has the power to construct work culture. On the other hand, for non-disabled workers, this becomes a communication channel to more aware of the potency of persons with visual impairments. Non disable informant said: “I'm so curious. I don't know how they watch movies. In the presence of this program, I feel free to talk and realize that they can do many things more than what I think” The BioskopBisik program becomes a new communication channel where the inclusiveness values sprout up among employees at PT. Thinkweb.

As a growing digital startup company, the company leaders recognize the need to understand the diverse communication processes between their employees. The program has proven to be effective in opening communication spaces and increasing embeddedness among employees. When groups and subgroups become larger and the relationship between them become more complex, there is an increasing need to understand the communication process as well as factors in the group structure that affect communication (Cohen et al., 1969). For workers with visual impairments, the program provides space for them to introduce themselves and to reconstruct people's perspective about themselves. This program uncovers at least the stereotypes about persons with visual impairments are not entirely true. One of the employees with visual impairments put forward: “Even though we can't see it, we can watch it in our own way”. What was conveyed by the informant above emphasized that the program was able to become a public space to reconfirm the negative stigma of people with disabilities. Thus, this can avoid the further effects of stigma. For example, isolation of persons with visual impairments from various company activities such as meetings due to the fear of other employees interacting with them. The opening of communication space within institution avoids the distribution of power that is spread from public discourse that can produce exclusion and domination. This promotes social consensus and inclusion (Dahlberg, 2005)

Another program of enforcement to support the potency of persons with visual impairments is learning in other fields. This policy is a stimulus for all employees to communicate with others. For persons with visual impairments, this policy provides an opportunity to explore alternatives and other potential fields that are possible for them. If the screen reader cannot facilitate it, the disabled person will be helped by other employees. The employee with visual impairments said: “I tried other fields that my friends worked on, I have tried coding and many other fields, but the most comfortable field for me is a content writer”. Learning opportunities in other fields allow

for capacity building and career paths for persons with visual impairments. Further, informal communication becomes an important aspect to establish embeddedness between employees in the company. Head of digital activity put forward:

“I'm close to them not only when working, for example, going to the mall together. At first, I was afraid to wonder about them. Because I often interact with them, now I often joke while laughing. I met with their friends from “Mitra Netra”. We have the initiative to hold digital marketing training together.”

The availability of communication channels makes the dominant group easier to accept the existence of subgroups. Furthermore, alternative communication channels are used to establish the most effective and rational collaboration procedures (Dahlberg, 2005). The leadership aspect and informal communication make the creation of activity initiatives that can be carried out together. This process confirms the knowledge of nondisabled employees at PT. Thinkweb regarding disability issues and fosters trust. This trust is characterized by various collaborations formed between persons with disabilities and non-disability. These trusts arise and are communicated by people with whom they regularly interact (David, 1998). Through intensive communication, understanding related to disability can reduce various negative perspectives toward persons with visual impairments.

In this company, informal norms are not only able to contiguous with the culture of corporate organization that has various formal rules, but also able to integrate with existing formal rules. Furthermore, informal norms can cover the lack of formal company rules with the existence of embeddedness between employees which has been a problem, especially in digital companies. The company only provides screen readers and has not been able to meet various accommodations and other facilities that support persons with visual impairments to work such as guiding blocks and accessible elevators. With the existence of informal norms, employees are more responsive to them. Cross-coupling condition between formal rules and informal norms at PT. Thinkweb able to cover the shortcomings of the government policies including the lack of technical instructions in the implementation of Law number 8 of 2016. The importance of cross-coupling conditions between informal norms and formal rules is realized to bring many benefits to the company. Finally, the cross-coupling condition between formal rules and informal norms can minimize social exclusion related to facilities and infrastructure that are not accessible for persons with visual impairments.

CONCLUSION

The presence of informal norms in increasing company inclusiveness begins with the formation of a network between PT. Tinkweb and disability organizations. It has an impact on the recruitment of persons with disabilities to create work environment inclusiveness. The value of inclusiveness at PT. Thinkweb continues to increase accompanied by leadership aspects and the opening of communication spaces for people with disabilities through the BioskopBisik program and learning opportunities in other fields. The value of inclusiveness that continues to develop raises norms to assist persons with disabilities when experiencing difficulties in accessing various available facilities and involving them in various activities.

Although the facilities and infrastructure are yet to be accessible for persons with visual impairments, informal norms that grow in this company can already eliminate social exclusion and promote social inclusiveness. Even its presence can overcome the problem of embeddedness between employees in the company. Therefore, it is not appropriate if a company employs persons with disabilities only to bring down the obligation in fulfilling a disability quota as required by disability law. Initiatives from companies to employ persons with disabilities can provide opportunities and show their potency. The limitations of facilities and infrastructure can be communicated and minimized by strengthening informal norms in the corporate environment. On the other hand, the government should begin to realize the potency of persons with visual disabilities in the field of information technology. Finally, various forms of training held by the government to empower persons with disabilities are no longer in conventional forms such as massage, but rather on information technology to keep up with the needs of the digital reformation.

This research has a limitation by only examining one start-up company in the field of digital agency. The characteristic of the company has different work cultures and can determine whether informal norms can work well in various characteristics of the work fields. Subsequent studies can be done to examine the role of informal norms in several companies with different characteristics in promoting work environment inclusiveness.

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