

Balancing Voices: Power Relations in Feminist Studies Involving Women with Disabilities in Yogyakarta

Fina Itriyati^a, Hartmantyo Pradigto Utomo^b

^{ab}Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

itriyati.fina@ugm.ac.id

Keywords: Abstract


feminist ethnography;
emancipatory research;
disability studies;
positionality; reflexivity

*etnografi feminis;
penelitian emansipatoris;
studi disabilitas;
posisionalitas; reflektivitas*

This research addresses a significant gap in ethnographic studies by focusing on women with disabilities in Javanese culture. The objective is to apply an emancipatory, affective feminist ethnographic approach that challenges power dynamics between researchers and participants, addressing issues of social class, disabled and non-disabled identities, and educational differences. Using participant observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of aural, textual, and visual data, the study explores lived experiences of these women. Key findings indicate that societal pressures, domestic violence, and pity sustain stigmas against disabled communities, whereas empathetic dialogue is essential for genuine narratives. The study advocates for continuous self-reflection to recognize subtle societal biases and calls for research with emancipatory values, amplifying marginalized voices and promoting inclusive policies that address social, psychological, and medical dimensions of women with disabilities.

Journal of Disability Studies
INKLUSI

Vol. 12, No. 02, 2025

 [10.14421/jjds.120207](https://doi.org/10.14421/jjds.120207)

Submitted: 18 Jun 2025

Accepted: 12 Nov 2025



Penelitian ini mengisi kesenjangan signifikan dalam studi etnografi dengan berfokus pada perempuan penyandang disabilitas dalam budaya Jawa. Tujuannya adalah untuk menerapkan pendekatan etnografi feminis yang emansipatoris dan afektif, yang menantang dinamika kekuasaan antara peneliti dan partisipan, serta mengatasi isu-isu kelas sosial, identitas disabilitas dan non-disabilitas, dan perbedaan pendidikan. Dengan menggunakan observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam, serta analisis data aural, tekstual, dan visual, studi ini mengeksplorasi pengalaman hidup para perempuan tersebut. Temuan utama menunjukkan bahwa tekanan masyarakat, kekerasan dalam rumah tangga, dan rasa kasihan melanggengkan stigma terhadap komunitas penyandang disabilitas, sedangkan dialog empatik sangat penting untuk menghasilkan narasi yang tulus. Studi ini mendorong refleksi diri yang berkelanjutan untuk mengenali bias masyarakat yang halus dan menyerukan penelitian dengan nilai-nilai emansipatoris, memperkuat suara-suara yang terpinggirkan, serta mempromosikan kebijakan inklusif yang membahas dimensi sosial, psikologis, dan medis dari perempuan penyandang disabilitas.

A. Introduction

This study employs a feminist ethnographic methodology to investigate the experiences of women with disabilities in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, with a particular emphasis on the power dynamics present within the research process itself. While ethnographic studies on disability in Indonesia have grown, a significant gap remains in critically examining the power relations between researchers and participants, especially within the context of Javanese culture. This research addresses this gap by not only documenting the lives of women with disabilities but also by offering a reflexive analysis of the methodological and ethical challenges in representing their experiences. By doing so, it aims to contribute to a more emancipatory and just approach to disability research, moving beyond the traditional approach that often reduces women with disabilities to mere objects of study. This research argues that a reflexive and power-sensitive methodology is crucial for producing ethical and emancipatory knowledge that can contribute to the empowerment of women with disabilities.

Disability studies have been shaped by the shift from a medical model, which views disability as an individual deficit, to a social model, which understands disability as a social construct. However, there are limitations to both models. The medical model can lead to stigma, while the social model may not fully account for the lived, embodied experiences of disability. This study moves beyond this dichotomy by incorporating an affective dimension, acknowledging the emotions and subjective experiences of women with disabilities, which are often overlooked in structural analyses. This approach pays attention to emotions, feelings, and subjective experiences that structural factor-focused research often overlooks (Thomas Stodulka et al., 2019). By considering the affective dimension, research can reveal how women with disabilities interpret and navigate their life experiences.

Previous research on disability in Indonesia has highlighted several key areas. For example, a study by Itriyati (2020) on women who became disabled after the 2006 Yogyakarta earthquake revealed the intersection of gender, disability, and disaster in shaping their lives. Similarly, De La Roche et al (2025) examined the role of communities in addressing the mobility needs of women with disabilities in Yogyakarta, emphasizing the importance of local support networks. Furthermore, Pirmasari & McQuaid (2023) have conducted feminist ethnographic work in Indonesia, highlighting the intersectional experiences of disability. While these studies provide valuable insights, they do not explicitly focus on the power dynamics within the research relationship itself. In studies on women with disabilities in Indonesia, there are at least four research trends that can be identified.

The first trend emphasizes moving away from the medical model, which critiques the individual approach that burdens and stigmatizes individuals with disabilities and views the world from the perspective of normality and ableism. Building upon this paradigm shift, the second trend involves positioning institutional collective networks as an advocacy strategy for people with disabilities, reflecting the practical implementation of the social model through collaborative efforts at the grassroots level. Complementing these bottom-up initiatives, the third trend involves positioning the central role of the state along with its policy agenda as the focus of criticism, highlighting the inadequacy of national frameworks in recognizing and facilitating the needs of women with disabilities across various sectors. Despite these progressive developments in theoretical perspectives and advocacy strategies, the fourth trend is identified as a lack of methodological reflection in disability studies, revealing that research continues to prioritize structural factors while positioning women with disabilities as objects rather than active subjects in knowledge production. These four trends share a common goal of comprehending and advocating for the conditions and situations of women with disabilities. However, there is a repetition that consistently prioritizes macro-level factors as the basis of analysis and positions women with disabilities as objects.

This study, therefore, positions itself at the intersection of feminist ethnography, disability studies, and postcolonial critique. It aims to comprehend the dynamics of power in the creation of knowledge regarding women with disabilities within a particular cultural framework. By critically reflecting on the research process, this study aims to deconstruct and challenge the hierarchical

relationship between the researcher and the researched and to amplify the voices of marginalized women. This research argues that a reflexive and power-sensitive methodology is crucial for producing ethical and emancipatory knowledge that can contribute to the empowerment of women with disabilities. This study aims to shift the position of women with disabilities from being the object of study to the subject of advocacy, where even the smallest of their voices are valuable because they are understood holistically along with their entire life processes.

To explore the emancipatory and affective dimensions in the study of women with disabilities in Yogyakarta, the author conducted a literature search on women with disabilities both globally and within Indonesia. The comparison between these two contexts is designed to investigate the diversity of experiences of women with disabilities from various backgrounds, with different interventions from various stakeholders such as NGOs, communities, and governments. The analysis of this comparative literature can help deepen the understanding of the experiences of women with disabilities at the local level, as well as demonstrate the interconnectedness between local knowledge and experiences with the continually evolving global knowledge.

In the global context, literature often views individuals with disabilities as research subjects, particularly when viewed as remnants of development within the framework of neoliberalism. The concept of neoliberal-ableism highlights the intersection of neoliberal policies with ableist ideals, which emphasize self-reliance and independence. This approach creates inadequacy for individuals with special needs who are unable to meet the demands of productivity and autonomy, resulting in a lack of support for them (Itriayati, 2020). Because of this viewpoint, the dominant theme in literature is the forms of vulnerability experienced by women with disabilities. Structural factors such as cultural-geographical stigmatization, institutional marginalization, workplace discrimination, policy discrimination, and migration contribute to vulnerabilities that hinder women with disabilities from accessing healthcare services and experiencing limitations in work mobility, as well as diminishing self-confidence and independence (Aguillar et al., 2022; Fish, 2016; Fish & Hatton, 2017; González, 2009; Owen et al., 2008; Prodingler et al., 2014; Xiong & Xiabei, 2021). Meanwhile, identity factors have been identified as causing vulnerability arising from racial and generational issues related to ableism and heteronormativity norms, which impede the recognition of the identities of women with disabilities, as their disability identities are always more prominent compared to other identity aspects such as race, generation, or sexual orientation (Petersen, 2006; Slater et al., 2018).

Currently, the most dominant methodological thinking remains focused on recommendations for collaborative research between individuals with disabilities and individuals without disabilities (Tsaputra, 2022). However, these collaborative efforts have not fully acknowledged the fundamental implications of research methods in the field of disabilities, namely power imbalances in knowledge production. There is not only a disparity between individuals with disabilities and non-disabled researchers but also in the more authoritative structures of knowledge reflected in scholarly works. Most studies mentioned tend to concentrate on the experiences of women with disabilities and the empirical issues they face. However, there is still a lack of reflective aspects in viewing these empirical experiences from a more critical perspective, such as exploring power imbalances in the knowledge production process.

The study of women with disabilities using a critical approach constantly strives to identify the gap between emancipatory action and theoretical accuracy. We present the problem of emancipation to assess the degree to which liberation approaches enable marginalized groups to transform oppressive systems. In the context of women with disabilities, this approach is crucial for examining and addressing interconnected forms of discrimination based on gender, disabilities, and other identity factors. In their study on women with disabilities in Palestine, Biggeri *et al.* (2023) introduced emancipatory research as a participatory methodology that can produce relevant information for policymaking and social empowerment. Training empowers research participants before all research stages begin. Researchers then step back during the process, acting only as facilitators and advisors. Shifting power relations in research involve participants in knowledge production and enable them to have a role in influencing discourse.

Within the framework of feminist ethnography, this research empirically positions the experiences and voices of women as the primary focus, highlighting the genuine agency within their everyday lives. By adding an affective dimension, this research seeks to recognize the social-psychological aspects of women with disabilities. This approach allows for a more holistic understanding of how their feelings, perceptions, and experiences are shaped in interaction with the social environment, particularly in the context of Javanese culture, which possesses distinct power dynamics.

Despite the proliferation of disability studies on women with disabilities in Indonesia and globally, a critical research gap persists: the overwhelming majority of existing scholarship focuses predominantly on structural barriers, policy inadequacies, and lived experiences of discrimination, while systematically neglecting two fundamental dimensions that are central to ethical and transformative research. First, there remains a conspicuous absence of critical reflexivity regarding the researcher's positionality and the inherent power asymmetries embedded in the knowledge production process, particularly when non-disabled researchers study disabled communities. Second, the affective dimension—encompassing the emotions, feelings, and psychosocial experiences of women with disabilities—has been largely marginalized in favor of structural analyses. This dual lacuna represents not merely a methodological oversight, but a fundamental epistemological limitation that perpetuates the objectification of women with disabilities even within ostensibly emancipatory research frameworks.

Therefore, this study explicitly aims to address this critical gap by integrating both an emancipatory approach that foregrounds researcher reflexivity and power relations, and an affective lens that centers the emotional and intersubjective experiences of women with disabilities in Yogyakarta within the specific cultural context of Javanese society. By doing so, this research seeks to advance disability scholarship beyond conventional structural analyses toward a more holistic, ethically grounded, and genuinely emancipatory understanding of women with disabilities' lived realities.

B. Research Methods

This study employed a feminist ethnographic methodology to investigate the lived experiences of women with disabilities in Yogyakarta, aiming to create a rigorous and contextually sensitive framework that navigates the complexities of power, positionality, and representation in research with marginalized communities. Grounded in a commitment to examining power differentials and marginalization across dimensions of gender, race, class, and sexuality (Davis & Christa, 2023), this approach was chosen for its capacity to reveal power dynamics in everyday interactions through a gendered lens, emphasizing women's experiences as a political imperative. The main goal was to give the women a voice and share their experiences, which will help shape public policy on issues like gender equality, reproductive rights, and violence against women (Davis & Christa, 2023; Hessami & Da Fonseca, 2020).

The primary method of data collection was participant observation, a technique that facilitates a comprehensive and immediate comprehension of the events, circumstances, and conditions of the research subjects (Davis & Christa, 2023). This immersive approach fostered an intimate understanding of the women's daily lives and the structural and personal challenges they face, enabling the collection of accurate and complex data from an emic perspective. The research acknowledges the epistemological paradox inherent in this approach—the tension between the researcher's knowledge as an outsider and the lived reality of the subjects under study. Data analysis was conducted in a manner consistent with feminist ethnographic principles, focusing on interpreting the collected data through the lens of power relations and affective dimensions to provide a comprehensive recognition of the complexities of their lived experiences and to deconstruct exploitative research practices.

Recognizing the inherent power imbalance between a non-disabled researcher and participants with disabilities, the research design incorporated a strong focus on researcher positionality and reflective capacity. Positionality is understood as the researcher's critical self-assessment of their position within the research context (Davis & Christa, 2023), including an awareness of how the researcher's own identity—in terms of gender, ability, class, and other social markers—shapes the research process, from the formulation of research questions to the interpretation of data. The researcher's position as a non-disabled academic carries with it certain privileges and biases that must be continuously reflected upon to avoid reproducing the very power hierarchies the research seeks to critique. To prevent the reproduction of inequality in this context, self-reflection and a critical understanding of power dynamics are crucial (Madison, 2005). To reduce the risks that come with this power imbalance, the research was set up to be collaborative, with participants involved in the research process from the beginning. They also reviewed the findings to make sure that their voices were accurately represented. This collaborative approach is essential in disability research to bridge the gap between the researcher and the participants and to co-construct knowledge (Connor et al., 2011).

Key ethical considerations included ensuring the privacy of participants, especially when discussing sensitive topics such as domestic violence, sexuality, and poverty, taking great care to ensure that the participants were not exploited or excessively exposed in the presentation of the research findings. The study adheres to a feminist research ethic that prioritizes the social and cultural contexts of the participants over rigid procedural guidelines, with ethical considerations woven into the fabric of the research relationship itself. The research also grappled with the risk of excessive empathy, which can lead to pity and reinforce a hierarchy of dependence (Chaudhry, 2019; Thomas, 1999), maintaining a critical distance to balance emotional engagement with objective reality. Epistemic reflexivity, or the critical examination of how knowledge is structured, involves a continuous process of self-awareness and critical evaluation of the assumptions, values, and social positions that shape the construction of knowledge.

The study embraces methodological openness to identify and include perspectives in disability studies that have been marginalized or excluded from academic discourse. The participants' embodied experiences serve as both the subject of investigation and a means to cultivate critical awareness regarding the structural and cultural obstacles they encounter (Connor et al., 2011), thereby establishing an intersubjective space for collaboration and contesting the prevalence of ableist viewpoints. The research is committed to developing fairer and more inclusive research strategies that move beyond simply understanding ethical dilemmas to actively challenging and transforming them, ultimately oriented towards social justice and driving social transformation for women with disabilities in Yogyakarta.

C. Result & Discussion

This section presents a reflective ethnographic analysis of the experiences of women with disabilities who survived the 2006 Yogyakarta earthquake. Adopting an affective ethnographic approach, this study moves beyond a conventional research narrative to foreground the emotional and relational dimensions of fieldwork. This approach, inspired by the work of the Affective Epistemologies collective, treats affect and emotion not as byproducts of research but as central to the ethnographic process and knowledge formation (Stodulka et al., 2019). By systematically documenting and reflecting on the affective dynamics between the researcher and the participants, this study seeks to bridge the epistemic gap often present in disability research and offer a more nuanced, humanistic representation of the participants' lived realities.

Our analysis is structured around four interconnected dimensions: (1) the documentation of affect, feelings, and emotions in the field; (2) the positioning of this emotional reflexivity as an

epistemic source for reinterpreting critical ethnographic concepts; (3) the spatiotemporal analysis of affective events; and (4) the role of the researcher's own affective experiences in the ethnographic writing process. This framework allows for a multi-layered analysis that captures the complexity of the participants' experiences while also critically examining the researcher's own positionality and power dynamics inherent in the research relationship.

The Dual Role of Narrative in Trauma and Healing

The research found that narrative storytelling, particularly through the local practice of *curhat* (confiding), served a dual purpose for the female survivors. Firstly, it was a crucial tool for building trust and rapport, allowing for a more dialogical and open interview process. This candid sharing transformed the act of confiding from a potentially stigmatized behavior into a powerful expression of their lived bodily experiences as women with disabilities. Secondly, the act of retelling their traumatic experiences became a significant part of their healing process. Consistent with existing literature on trauma recovery, sharing personal narratives allowed survivors to process trauma, build resilience, and foster empathy (Couser, 2005; Howard, 1991). Over the decade following the disaster, participants' narratives shifted from recounting raw trauma to reflecting a sense of acceptance and strength, marked by the use of terms like *nrima* (accept), *pasrah* (surrender), and *nglakoni* (endure). This demonstrates a significant emotional and psychological journey from victimhood to survivorship.

Navigating Systemic Barriers through Affective Advocacy

The study identified several areas where women with disabilities faced significant systemic barriers, and where informal, affect-based advocacy became critical. These included instances of domestic violence, the need for legal recognition to access empowerment programs, and financial precarity. A formal, procedural approach to advocacy was often inadequate. Instead, an affective approach—centered on believing victims' stories, collaborating with local notaries for legal documentation, and providing emotional and network support for employment—proved more effective. This highlights that for marginalized groups, advocacy is not merely a political or legal process, but an emotional and relational one tailored to their specific, lived realities.

A significant part of this reflexivity emerged from direct advocacy efforts. For instance, when one participant, Ibu Sari, disclosed her experience with domestic violence, the immediate response was not merely to document her story but to provide a safe space and connect her with resources. She expressed her relief and frustration:

"For years, I felt no one would believe me. They see my body and think I am helpless, that I cannot possibly understand what is happening. When you truly listened without pity, it was like a weight was lifted. In the circle of activists, I learned where I can seek help and find sanctuary. They see me not just as a broken body but as a human being who has a voice."

This quote from Ibu Sari illustrates how the act of listening, devoid of the infantilizing pity that often characterizes interactions with disabled individuals becomes a political act (Garza, 2020). It validates the participant's agency and challenges the oppressive narrative that equates physical disability with a lack of capacity (Chaudhry, 2019).

The Embodied Experience of Disability and Social Hierarchy

The research revealed the complex interplay between the embodied experience of disability and the social hierarchies between researchers and participants. Participants often expressed feelings of being in a subordinate position, reflecting societal representations of disability as passive and lacking agency. The researcher, in turn, had to navigate feelings of privilege associated with being able-

bodied, educated, and not having experienced the same trauma. This dynamic, while challenging, became a critical source of data. The use of verbatim transcripts, which captured jokes, curses, and shifts in language, allowed for an analysis of how participants asserted their agency in ways that subverted traditional power dynamics (Swartz & Nyamnjoh, 2018; Thajib et al., 2019). The transcription methods capturing language shifts between Indonesian and Javanese reveal how participants resist dominant power structures through their linguistic agency and expressive choices. This discomfort became a methodological tool to deconstruct the power imbalance.

Another participant, Mbak Yuni, commented on this dynamic:

"You come here and write about us. It is good, maybe it will help. But you will leave. We are still here. It is easy to feel like we are just stories for you. But you ask about our feelings, you share your own... it feels different. It feels like we are building something together."

This sentiment highlights the potential for exploitation in ethnographic research and the importance of building reciprocal, collaborative, and ethically grounded relationships. The emotional fatigue experienced by the researcher when processing stories of trauma is not a sign of weakness but a vital part of the affective methodology, a source of knowledge that deepens the ethical and political commitment to the research and its participants. This reflexive process is, in itself, a healing method for both the informant and the researcher, narrowing the methodological gap and fostering a more inclusive and sensitive research practice.

Methodological Reflections on Affective Ethnography

To capture the affective dimensions of the participants' experiences, a multi-modal documentation strategy was employed, integrating aural (voice recordings of *curhat*), textual (verbatim transcripts and diaries), and visual (documentary photography) materials. This was not merely for data triangulation but to create a rich, textured archive of emotional expression that could reveal the research dilemmas and correct knowledge imbalances between the non-disabled researcher and the participants with disabilities.

The primary aural strategy involved voice recording during *curhat* sessions. The act of *curhat* proved essential for building rapport and trust, allowing participants to comfortably share intimate details of their trauma, rehabilitation, and struggles with social and familial acceptance. Voice recordings accurately documented these conversations, capturing subtle yet significant expressions, jokes, and tone shifts for later analysis.

We used verbatim transcripts and a researcher's diary for textual documentation. Verbatim transcription was crucial for capturing the nuances of language, particularly the code-switching between Indonesian and Javanese, which often signified shifts in emotional depth when discussing sensitive topics like domestic violence, financial hardship, or sexuality. Swartz and Nyamnjoh (2018) contend that informal discourse, encompassing humor and profanity, can serve as a significant data source, disclosing authenticity and autonomy that may otherwise go unarticulated. While transcripts captured the conversation, the researcher's diary was indispensable for recording personal affective responses—feelings of compassion, tension, or ethical unease—and for reflecting on the privileges and power imbalances inherent in the researcher's position (Pillow, 2003; Slater et al., 2018).

Visual documentation through documentary photography aimed to capture the daily lives, struggles, and resilience of the participants. These images, when analyzed alongside field notes and diary entries, served as powerful prompts for evoking emotional memories and generating more holistic, reflective narratives (Biggeri et al., 2023). As (Fawns, 2022) suggests, photographs are more than memory aids; they are focal points for reconstructing and narrating past experiences in

ethnographic writing. Together, these sensory practices formed the foundation for a deeply reflexive analysis, turning an accumulation of affective experiences into a method for both understanding and advocacy.

However, this approach is not without its challenges. The close proximity to participants' trauma inevitably led to emotional fatigue and secondary trauma for the researcher. This emotional cost, however, is not a sign of methodological weakness but rather an indicator of the profound engagement required for an ethical and empathetic research practice (Bonet & McWilliams, 2019; Naples & Sachs, 2000). For the researcher's well-being and the research's integrity, it is vital to recognize and manage the emotional aspects of fieldwork.

Spatiotemporal Dynamics and Analysis

The empirical findings of this study are analyzed through the lens of affective ethnography, which emphasizes the role of emotions and reflexivity in knowledge production (Pillow, 2003; Stodulka et al., 2019). The four dimensions of this approach—documenting affect, using emotional reflexivity as an epistemic source, considering spatiotemporal context, and acknowledging the researcher's affective experience in writing—provide a robust framework for understanding the experiences of women with disabilities post-disaster.

The affective experiences documented in this research are deeply embedded in a spatiotemporal context. A retrospective approach was necessary, as the research took place years after the 2006 earthquake. This temporal distance revealed two distinct affective periods. The first, immediately following the disaster, was characterized by raw trauma. The second, a decade later, was marked by reflection, as articulated by participants through words like *nrima* (accept) and *pasrah* (surrender). This temporal shift allowed for a validation of the healing process, while also highlighting the enduring nature of the trauma. The analysis of these periods revealed the emotional costs for both participants and the researcher, reaffirming that documenting tragedy is an affective, not just an intellectual, responsibility (Bonet & McWilliams, 2019). It requires specific researcher skills to confront and process the pain and injustices they encounter.

The *curhat* sessions and the subsequent narrative shifts observed over time directly illustrate the importance of spatiotemporal context. The retrospective method allowed for a validation of the healing process, showing how the affective experience of trauma changed over a decade. The initial raw narratives of pain and loss evolved into reflective stories of acceptance, providing a longitudinal view of post-traumatic growth that a single point-in-time study could not capture.

Furthermore, the informal advocacy actions undertaken by the researcher demonstrate the concept of emotional reflexivity as a political and methodological commitment. The researcher's feelings of compassion and responsibility, rather than being bracketed as 'unscientific,' became a catalyst for actions that directly addressed the participants' needs. This aligns with the argument that in feminist ethnography, the researcher's emotional engagement can be a source of knowledge and a tool for social justice, challenging the traditional separation between researcher and activist (Naples & Sachs, 2000). The study indicates that an affective approach can lead to more ethical and impactful research by creating a safer, more transparent, and mutually beneficial relationship between the researcher and the researched.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This affective ethnographic study makes several key contributions to both theory and practice in disability research. First, it contributes to the growing field of affective epistemologies by demonstrating its practical application in disability studies. It provides a methodological framework for integrating emotion and reflexivity into the research process, challenging the traditional

ethnographic paradigm that often prioritizes detached observation. By centering the affective, this study offers a way to bridge the methodological gap between researcher and participant, addressing the power hierarchies and potential for exploitation that are particularly acute in research with marginalized communities.

Second, it advances a more humanistic and empowering representation of disability. Moving beyond the common narrative of tragedy and helplessness, this study foregrounds the agency, resilience, and complex emotional lives of women with disabilities. The use of *curhat* and the focus on the participants' own narrative framing counters the tendency to view disabled bodies as sites of "ability trouble" (Hladki, 2005). This approach offers a model for feminist ethnographic writing that is not only academically rigorous but also liberating and empowering for the subjects of the research.

The findings also have significant practical implications. For disaster management and response agencies, this study highlights the critical need for psychosocial support that is culturally sensitive and long-term. The healing process is not linear and extends far beyond the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The narratives of the participants underscore the importance of creating safe spaces for storytelling and emotional expression as part of the recovery process.

Furthermore, the advocacy-oriented nature of this research provides a model for how academics can engage in socially responsible and impactful research. By responding to the immediate needs of participants—whether related to domestic violence, legal recognition, or financial stability—the research process itself becomes a form of intervention. This has implications for how research ethics are conceptualized, moving from a passive "do no harm" principle to a more active commitment to solidarity and social justice.

D. Conclusion

This study makes a compelling case for a paradigm shift in disability research, moving away from objectifying and extractive methodologies to a more ethically grounded and empowering framework. By integrating feminist ethnography with an affective and emancipatory approach, the research not only documents the lived realities of women with disabilities in Yogyakarta but also critically examines the power dynamics inherent in the research process itself. The authors argue that by acknowledging and actively working to dismantle the hierarchies between researcher and participant, a more just and authentic form of knowledge production can be achieved.

The study's findings demonstrate the profound value of an affective ethnographic approach. The use of '*curhat*' as a research method, for example, transformed the data collection process into a dialogical and therapeutic encounter, allowing for the emergence of authentic narratives of trauma, resilience, and agency. The multi-modal documentation strategy, combining aural, textual, and visual data, created a rich and textured archive of the participants' experiences, moving beyond the limitations of traditional, text-based research. Furthermore, the study's emphasis on researcher reflexivity provides a powerful model for how to navigate the ethical and emotional complexities of research with marginalized communities.

While the study's contributions are significant, it is important to consider its limitations and potential areas for future research. The deep emotional engagement of the researcher, while central to the study's methodology, also raises questions about the potential for bias and the sustainability of such an approach. Future research could explore how to balance affective engagement with critical distance and how to provide adequate support for researchers working in emotionally demanding contexts. Additionally, while the study is deeply rooted in the specific cultural context of Yogyakarta, further research is needed to explore the applicability of this framework in other cultural and social settings. Finally, the study's focus on the researcher-participant relationship could be expanded to

include a more critical analysis of the broader institutional and structural forces that shape disability research and policy.

E. Acknowledgments

The author would like to acknowledge Nefa Wahyuning Anggraini for her valuable assistance in compiling and organizing the data, which contributed to the overall progress of this research.

F. References

- Aguillar, K., Hughes, R., Gretchen, G., Vanessa, S., & Sheryl, M. (2022). They Didn't Ask." Rural Women With Disabilities and Experiences of Violence Describe Interactions With the Healthcare System. *Qualitative Health Research*, 32(4), 656–669.
- Biggeri, M., Ciani, F., Giampiero Griffo, & Sunil Deepak. (2023). Knowledge production and human rights enhancement: The role and potentialities of emancipatory disability research. In *Research Handbook on Disability Policy* (pp. 17–32). Edgar Publishing.
- Bonet, S. W., & McWilliams, J. A. (2019). "Documenting Tragedy": Ethnography and the (Hidden) Costs of Bearing Witness. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 50(1), 114–125. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aeq.12275>
- Chaudhry, V. (2019). Centering embodiment in disability research through performance ethnography. *Qualitative Social Work*, 18(5), 754–771. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325018767728>
- Connor, D. J., Gallagher, D., & Ferri, B. A. (2011). Broadening Our Horizons: Toward a Plurality of Methodologies in Learning Disability Research. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 34(2), 107–121. <https://doi.org/10.1177/073194871103400201>
- Couser, G. T. (2005). Disability and (Auto)Ethnography: Riding (and Writing) the Bus with My Sister. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 34(2), 121–142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241604272089>
- Davis, D.-A., & Christa, C. (2023). *Feminist ethnography: Thinking through methodologies, challenges, and possibilities*. The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group.
- De La Roche, D., Curl, A., & Fitt, H. (2025). The power of community: Perspectives from women with disabilities on making healthcare journeys in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 124, 104182. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2025.104182>
- Dubois, H., & Nivakosk, S. (with European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions). (2023). *Unaffordable and inadequate housing in Europe*. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2806/715002>
- Fawns, T. (2022). An Entangled Pedagogy: Looking Beyond the Pedagogy–Technology Dichotomy. *Postdigital Science and Education*, 4(3), 711–728. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-022-00302-7>
- Fish, R. (2016). 'They've said I'm vulnerable with men': Doing sexuality on locked wards. *Sexualities*, 19(5–6), 641–658. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460715620574>
- Fish, R., & Hatton, C. (2017). Gendered experiences of physical restraint on locked wards for women. *Disability & Society*, 32(6), 790–809. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2017.1329711>
- Garza, A. de la. (2020). Re-Victimization of Domestic Violence Victims. *BYU J. Pub. L*, 25(1). <https://digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/jpl/vol35/iss1/4>

- González, M. L. (2009). Getting to know reality and breaking stereotypes: The experience of two generations of working disabled women. *Disability & Society*, 24(4), 447–459. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590902879056>
- Hessami, Z., & Da Fonseca, M. L. (2020). Female political representation and substantive effects on policies: A literature review. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 63, 101896. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2020.101896>
- Hladki, J. (2005). Thresholds of the Flesh: Disability and Dis-ease and Producing 'Ability Trouble.' *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 27(3), 265–285. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10714410500228942>
- Howard. (1991). Culture Tales: A narrative approach to thinking, cross-cultural psychology, and psychotherapy. *American Psychologist*, 46(3), 187–197. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.46.3.187>
- Itriyati, F. (2020). The Abandoned Survivors: Newly Disabled Women. *The Australian National University*.
- Madison, D. (2005). *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*. SAGE.
- Naples, N. A., & Sachs, C. (2000). Standpoint Epistemology and the Uses of Self-Reflection in Feminist Ethnography: Lessons for Rural Sociology*. *Rural Sociology*, 65(2), 194–214. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1549-0831.2000.tb00025.x>
- Owen, K., Hubert, J., & Hollins, S. (2008). Moving home: The experiences of women with severe intellectual disabilities in transition from a locked ward. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 36(4), 220–226. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-3156.2007.00484.x>
- Petersen, A. (2006). An African-American woman with disabilities: The intersection of gender, race and disability. *Disability & Society*, 21(7), 721–734. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590600995345>
- Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), 175–196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839032000060635>
- Pirmasari, D. A., & McQuaid, K. (2023). Halin ai: Intersectional Experiences of Disability, Climate Change, and Disasters in Indonesia. *Social Inclusion*, 11(4). <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v11i4.7105>
- Prodinger, B., Shaw, L., Laliberte Rudman, D., & Stamm, T. (2014). Negotiating disability in everyday life: Ethnographical accounts of women with rheumatoid arthritis. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 36(6), 497–503. <https://doi.org/10.3109/09638288.2013.800594>
- Slater, T., Ágústsdóttir, E., & Haraldsdóttir, F. (2018). Becoming intelligible woman: Gender, disability and resistance at the border zone of youth. *Feminism & Psychology*, 28(3), 409–426. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353518769947>
- Swartz, S., & Nyamnjoh, A. (2018). Research as freedom: Using a continuum of interactive, participatory and emancipatory methods for addressing youth marginality. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 74(3). <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i3.5063>
- Thajib, F., Samia, D., & Thomas, S. (2019). Introduction: Affective Dimensions of Fieldwork and Ethnography. In *Affective Dimensions of Fieldwork and Ethnography*. Springer.
- Thomas, C. (1999). *Female Forms: Experiencing and Understanding Disability*. Open University Press.

- Thomas Stodulka, Samia Dinkelaker, & Ferdiansyah Thajib. (2019). Fieldwork, ethnography and the empirical affect montage. In *Analyzing Affective Societies Methods and Methodologies* (1st Edition, p. 17). Routledge.
- Tsaputra, A. (2022). Memproduksi Pengetahuan yang Lebih Terbuka; Pengalaman Riset Bersama Peneliti Bukan Penyandang Disabilitas. In *Kesetaraan Gender, Disabilitas dan Inklusi Sosial dalam Praktik; Pengalaman Riset dan Advokasi*.
- Xiong, Y., & Xiabei, L. (2021). Visually impaired women on the move: The intersection of gender and disability in China. *Disability & Society*, 37(4), 1–19.