

# Gaming for All: Discourse and Identity amongst *Difabel* Gamers in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

This article aims to study the use of digital games as interactive media among *difabel*; Indonesianized portmanteau of differently abled, gamers in Indonesia, including but not limited to the use of digital games as a platform for socialization, as sociotechnical artefacts to gain collective support and provide better access to community and social interaction, in addition to involvements in digital gaming competitions. This article aims to explain developments of *difabel* individuals' discourse and their construction of identities during social interaction with digital games.

## Keywords

Digital games, disabilities, discourse, identity, social construction, differently abled.

## INTRODUCTION

Unique social constructions of disabilities can only be articulated by acknowledging *difabel*'s discursive identities amidst the hegemonic dominant culture of non-disabled individuals (Charlton, 2000; Thohari, 2012; Maftuhin, 2016; Priyanti, 2018). To that end, this article focuses on subjective sociocultural framing of gaming experiences with the purpose of understanding how *difabel* gamers construct their discourses and develop identities through the medium of digital games (Gibbons, 2015). This article provides a clear conceptual connection between disability studies and critical game studies in order to position digital games as sociocultural artefacts among disability culture.

This research uses a qualitative social research method in the sociocultural tradition of communication sciences. The research data are collected by micro-

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ethnography and analyzed with narrative theory (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008; Bryman, 2012). Research participants are four individuals or groups who have been selected using purposive samplings (Bryman, 2012) based on the quality of their engagement with digital games as an expressive medium (Gibbons, 2015). Qualitative data of this research is the stated experiences of the participants regarding empowerment related to digital games. Primary analytical categories (Bryman, 2012) are disability narratives of discourse and identity through engagement with digital games, which will be formulated in the methodology section. It will be concluded with a summary and evaluations of role of digital games as sociotechnical artefacts in the development of *difabel* discourses and identities, followed by reflections for future studies in media and communication, game studies, and disability studies.

## **DISABILITY DISCOURSE AND IDENTITY**

Historical and political relations between *difabel* and non-disabled individuals in civil societies are marked with hegemonic divisions of ‘others’ and ‘beings’, which perpetuates a lack of identity articulation among *difabel* people and mutes their voice of interest (Charlton, 2000; Putnam, 2005)—akin to assignments of other minority types to the category of otherness, outside of the legitimate system (Said, 1977; Gramsci, 2006; Mukherjee, 2017). *Difabel* are also often excluded from economic opportunities readily available to non-disabled and are generally forced to rely on the support of the non-disabled (Charlton, 2000; McNeese, 2013).

This is a direct consequence of the domination of culture and consciousness by non-disabled (Charlton, 2000). Within these domains, dominant cultural positioning of disabilities by the non-disabled heavily influences the assignment of normative values in the overarching and encompassing dualistic political framework of ruling and ruled (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999; Charlton, 2000; Marx & Engels, 2006; Ting- Toomey & Chung, 2012; Waldschmit, 2017). The most significant underlying issue is how the hegemonic culture of the non-disabled renders *difabel* identities invisible or deviant, as dominant cultural conventions are constructed in the interests and under values of non-disabled socio-political actors (Oliver, 1996; Drake, 1999; Charlton, 2000; Berressem, 2017; Waldschmit, 2017). One of most tangible cultural practices of marginalization is through the use of the term ‘impairment’, which is culturally biased as it carries the meaning of powerlessness and incapability. It also permeates the normative consciousness, perpetuating disability disempowerment (Charlton, 2000; Thohari, 2012; Waldschmit, 2017; Priyanti, 2018).

Development of disability discourse and construction of *difabel* identities is empowering for *difabel* gamers for two reasons. Firstly, it acknowledges asymmetrical power relations between difabled and non-difabled people resulting from social constructions that reproduce dominant hegemonic discourses of non-disabled individuals. (Charlton, 2000; Thohari, 2012; Priyanti, 2018). Secondly, it focuses on shifting power and agency to the difabled in paving their cultural trajectory (Charlton, 2000; Priyanti, 2018).

## **DISABILITY AND DIGITAL GAMES**

There is a significant similarity in research focus between disability studies and game studies in a social context. Similar to the sociocultural construction of disabilities, digital games are sociotechnical artefacts designed to express the ideology and cultures of their makers or dominant hegemonic users within specific cultural contexts (Winner, 1986; Juul, 2005; Fron et al, 2007; Sisler, 2008; Sicart,

2009; Bogost, 2010). The vital intersection between these studies is highlighted in the empirical research of Gerling et al (2014) which elaborates that attitudes toward impairments can be changed to intended cognitive, affective and conative within empowering identities and culture, through embodied technological interactions.

Reflecting Fron et al's (2007) arguments regarding alienation of less politically powerful members of gaming culture, Gibbons (2015) argues that digital game environments are dominated by non-disabled individuals who are often indifferent towards the disabled. Specifically, their production aspects and textual expressions. Digital games culture is encompassed by "difficulty and a belief that only certain players deserve to advance" (Gibbons, 2015: 31). Gibbons (2015) exemplifies these circumstances through the case of Bioware's Jennifer Hepler who received backlash for her idea of allowing players to skip combat elements in digital games that require psychomotor capabilities which are absent in individuals with certain disabilities.

Paul (2018) argues that digital games culture upholds values of meritocracy with implication that only capable members are allowed to engage with them. These values often disadvantage *disabled* users, as digital the interfaces of digital games (Kirkpatrick, 2009; Bierre et al, 2005), are often designed based on the experiences of non-disabled individuals (Gibbons, 2015). Thus, inclusive gaming environments are multidimensional cultural productions which require multiple approaches to empowerment (Gibbons, 2015; Fordham & Ball, 2019; Ledder, 2019).

We propose two approaches in creating inclusive gaming environments: actors and texts. Actors refer to human participants whose activities shape the general logic of technologies and practices within digital game culture. Texts are meaningful actions regarding actors' interaction with digital games which are rooted in cultural identity (Fernandez-Vara, 2015). Inclusive texts of digital games are, therefore, practices and contents which help the disabled to access and express themselves in digital games (Bierre et al, 2005; Gibbons, 2015) in empathic and dignified manners (Fordham & Ball, 2019; Ledder, 2019).

The gap in phenomenon is about the access towards texts that are often inaccessible to and unrepresentative of *disabled* players (Bierre et al, 2005; Gibbons, 2015). As described by Gibbons (2015) and Fordham & Ball (2019), inclusive digital game texts for *disabled* players can still be considered rare, owing to the reluctance to accept them in digital game culture, rejections of such texts for to their unfamiliarity, and difficulty in designing them in an accessible environment. On the other hand, there have been efforts to formalise creations of inclusive texts (Bierre et al, 2005; Stewart & Misuraca, 2013) which are supported by governments and special interest groups and are aimed toward both *disabled* and non-disabled players. Nevertheless, this ambivalence provides an illustration that the effectiveness of inclusivity of *disabled* players through digital game texts are still less than optimal.

This suboptimal inclusivity via inclusive digital game texts leads to the formulation of another gap in knowledge. Research by Bierre et al (2005), Gerling et al (2014), Gibbons (2015), Fordham & Ball (2019) and Ledder (2019) do not evaluate sociocultural experiences of *disabled* players. This is a significant gap as, hermeneutically, media texts are dissociated with their

authors (Hall, 1980; Croteau & Hoynes, 2003; Bertrand & Hughes, 2005); thus, making the audience's sociocultural experience imperative in constructions of meaning (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003; Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). In digital games, texts are only meaningful when they are experienced by gamers with their distinctive cultural backgrounds (Aarseth, 2004; Juul, 2005; Neitzel, 2005; Sicart, 2009; Rigby & Ryan, 2011; Thornham, 2011; Fernandez- Vara.

Based on these understandings, this article plans to study how difabled gamers develop discourse and construct identity by interacting with digital games and their sociotechnical assemblage (Winner, 1986; Thornham, 2011). The next section will discuss the methodology of this research

## METHODOLOGY

This research is conducted under the sociocultural tradition of communication sciences with strong emphasis on ethnographic methodology (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008; Bryman, 2012). Sociocultural refers to understanding of experiences by individuals in how they construct meaning through their interactions with other individuals or cultural groups, while ethnography is a systematic methodology to obtain data of those experience (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008; Bryman, 2012). The tradition and the approach focus on how individual gaming experiences correlate with collective aspects of disability. Sociocultural theory in general concerns with enculturation of social process through interaction among individuals within certain cultural environment (Vygotsky,1997). In communication sciences, the process of enculturation involves message transmission and reception within specific cultural contexts (Littlejohn & Foss, 2014). Media uses also play important roles in the message exchange process as media contents are constructed by referring to specific culture which, therefore, reflect the values of said specific culture. These concepts are relevant to conceptualization of disabilities which are flexible from a culture to another.

This research was conducted using an ethnographic approach in line with the sociocultural tradition of communication sciences. Participants were selected based on their engagement, whether direct or indirect, with digital games (purposive sampling). All participants were differently abled and reported experiencing empowerment from their relationships with digital gaming. Thus, they were able to articulate *difabel* discourses and identities. Research participants are sampled using purposive sampling which takes into consideration their engagements with digital games and how those engagements correlate with research questions that we have formulated. Research participants are *difabel* who experience empowerment either by their own engagements with digital games as sociotechnical artefacts, or through empowering actions from and/or with external actors which are strongly related to digital games. Therefore, they can articulate their discourses and identities of *difabel*.

Open interview and participant observation are data collecting methods to obtain data from *difabel* gamers. Open interview and participant observation data collecting method are utilized in this research due to their explorative and interpretative affordances; as we are focusing our research on sociocultural experiences of *difabel* gamers (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008; Bryman, 2012). Regarding sampling of participants, we employ purposive sampling where participants are selected based on their relevancies to research themes (Bryman,

2012). We collected data through open interviews and participant observation, methods selected for their explorative and interpretive natures. We conducted four interviews in total, two group interviews and two individual interviews.

There are four participants of this article; two participants were interviewed as groups while another two were interviewed individually. First participants are four members of E-Sports Ability, an Indonesian special interest group who are based in Jakarta and specialize in promoting empowerment of *difabel* gamers through participations in e-sports competitions. They are Shena Septiani, Marvel Buhamir, and Dody Christnanda. During summer of 2019, E-Sports Ability Indonesia collaborated with Bekasi City Council and several business partners in organizing ESports for Everyone on June 29<sup>th</sup> 2019. Marvel and Dodi are deaf, while Shena is a non-disabled ally. When inquired regarding ethical policy, they explicitly express their willingness to disclose their identities. However, they requested that identities of several institutions which are mentioned by them during the interview to be withheld.

The second participant is a gamer from Special Region Yogyakarta (Indonesian: *Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta*) with dysfunctional left hand. Per request by the participant, his identity is concealed and they are assigned a pseudonym of 'Adam' to identify and distinct them from other participants. Adam has been playing digital games since he was 7 years old and was exceptionally active in online modding community of *Grand Theft Auto IV*. Unlike other research participants, Adam does not actively participate in a disabilities special interest group. Thus, his discourse and identity are contrasting other participants.

The third participant is Muhammad Afdhal; a deaf undergraduate student of Brawijaya University. He describes himself as an active gamer who socializes intensively through his engagements with digital games. He attended the interview session with Nisrina Firdausi and Yoga Dirgantara who are representatives of Akar Tuli Malang; a special interest group focusing on empowerment of deaf community in the City of Malang, Indonesia. Together, we discussed social construction of disabled identity and empowerment of Afdhal as a deaf gamer through digital games and linguistic meaning, identity and social constructions of disability in Indonesia as part of Afdhal's sociocultural network.

The fourth participant is a right-hand amputee who works as a motorbike courier for one of the biggest transportation companies in Indonesia. The fourth participant requested that his real identity to be withheld, and subsequently requested to be identified as #PendekarTanganSatu (The One-Armed Warrior). In his spare time, #PendekarTanganSatu is active as a *Mobile Legends Bang Bang* player, and he has won a *Mobile Legends Bang Bang* tournament. He has been participating in E-Sports Ability since July 2019. The significance of #PendekarTanganSatu's participation in this research is because he was not born as a disability. Instead, he was involved in a traffic accident which resulted in amputation of his right arm. Whereas most others were born as disabilities. This research, thus, aims to understand how non-native *difabel* interacts with digital games and how he experiences empowerment actions.

Main data of this research are statements from participants and observation from researchers. Collected data will be analysed by using narrative analysis method (Bryman, 2012). Narrative analysis method is considered to be suitable

for this research because of two main reasons: disability identities and discourses, and narrative of gamers' experiences as the main framework of our research, and emphasize on sociocultural experiences of participants in building the aforementioned narrative theme. Bryman (2012) argues that narrative analysis focus on construction of narrative meaning through mapping of research participants' sociocultural networks. The main narrative plots of this research are discourse and role of digital games in constructing *difabel* identities of research participants. This article to study how participants' interactions with digital games intersect with their developments of discourses and how participants construct discursive identities of disabilities based on their interactions with digital games.

## DISCUSSIONS

### Theme of Discourse

Shena Septiani, the founder of E-Sports Ability Indonesia, started this special interest group due to what she perceives as lack of support for *difabel* in accessing technology. E-Sports Ability Indonesia was formed through sociocultural network interaction among individuals with interests in identities of disabilities in forming an inclusive gaming environment. She networked with Marvel Buhamir; one of key members in E-Sports Ability Indonesia who is a prominent deaf *Player Unknown Battleground Mobile (PUBGM)* player. Together with his co-players, they answered Shena's requests to form an all-*difable* team. Through their interactions within the community, Shena learned about the identities and cultural practices of *difabel* gamers but also that these identities and cultural practices could not transpire due to lack of access in the form of organizational support and legitimacy within legal, government and private sectors. E-Sports Ability Indonesia has a vision to provide such access for *difabel* e-sports athletes.

The dominant discourse of E-Sports Ability Indonesia reflects social construction of disability (Charlton, 2000; Siebers, 2001; Putnam, 2005; Thohari, 2012; McNeese, 2013; Priyanti, 2018) in which development of individual with disabilities' identities and their implementations through real actions; which are initiated by *difabel* actors, are formative components for empowerment. There are two analyses to support that argument. The first analysis concerns with the construction of identity. E-Sports Ability Indonesia was founded as a forum for *difabel* to express their digital gaming identity within inclusive environments. So far, they have encouraged *difabel* players to gather and develop play environments which reflect their culture.

Not all participants agree with E-Sports Ability Indonesia, however. Pseudonym Adam argues that the use of unified labels in the name of empowerment has the potential to subjugate *difabel* persons by muting their individual subjectivities. Adam asserts that acts of empowerment should take a phenomenological approach from oneself to oneself based on ones' interests, needs, and meaning-making. He is wary about the trap of dependence if a *difabel* does not learn to be self-sufficient including in digital gaming. He continues by stating that *difabel* gamers must not lose self-respect for themselves and they should take matters of accessibility into their own hands.

Pseudonym Adam and Shena from E-Sports Ability Indonesia both agree about how empowerments have potential to be commodified. Shena explained that E-Sports Ability Indonesia often collaborate with presses and social media influencers who merely interviews and participate for their own contents. Several news outlets which covered E-Sports Ability also did not provide follow-up reporting about the

special interest group's activities. Adam expresses his concerns about 'clickbait journalistic products' and new media contents which frame *difabels* as dependent and helpless groups to gain sympathy. Such actions are more offensive than empowering. As argued by Charlton (2000) and Thohari (2012), the caveat which social model of disability often proverbially falls into is objectification of disabilities as it often sets out from non-disabilities and rarely thoroughly involves *difabel* in policy making. Adam and Shena's arguments about commodification contents and labors (Mosco, 2009) regarding empowerments of disabilities is a sad perversion of social model of disabilities.

An interesting juxtaposition between E-Sports Ability Indonesia and pseudonym Adam occurs in their spatial scopes. E-Sports Abilities' activities mostly occupy public spaces, while pseudonym Adam is a relatively introvert individual who by his own admission, is "paranoid of (his) privacy". Discourse of disabilities empowerment via digital games of E-Sports Ability Indonesia is a collective effort within an inclusive gaming environment in the molecular world. For Adam, however, social construction of identity as disabilities related to gaming occur in virtual space with limited molecular world interactions. Discursively, E-Sports Ability Indonesia conduct empowerment as a networked activity while pseudonym Adam perceives it as a subjective social construction. It is important to note that Adam does not perceive himself to need affirmative action in gaming.

Afdhal's gaming space is in the middle. He is a communal gamer limited to his closest friends and family. His family and closest gaming friends mostly treated him similarly as they would among themselves, and Afdhal did not consciously experience special affirmative treatment. Afdhal's gaming experiences are also a negotiation of those of E-Sports Ability Indonesia members' and pseudonym Adams. Like members of E-Sports Ability and Adam, Afdhal's gaming community provided positive experience specifically in how it provided him with strong sociocultural network who uplifted his self-esteem. Afdhal played games competitively with team like E-Sports Ability Indonesia, but his team consisted entirely of non-*difabel* like pseudonym Adam's. It is important to note that Afdhal is relatively open about his struggles to fit-in as *difabel* gamers in non-*difabel* environment when he was younger. Such openness is something that members of E-Sports Ability Indonesia and pseudonym Adam did not discuss during interview sessions.

For #PendekarTanganSatu, discourse of disability is a narrative of transition. #PendekarTanganSatu is an amputee and, thus, embody culture and identity of disability when he is already an adult. He is akin to a forced migrant who experiences different culture not by his own volition (Siebers, 2017). #PendekarTanganSatu had to readapt himself to a minority identity and all its underlying discourse (Siebers; 2014, 2017). Likewise, he also experienced cultural pain as a result of clashing values between *difabel* and non-disabled (Siebers, 2017) and his transitioning position after he received his amputation. #PendekarTanganSatu said that his parents were understandably shocked and traumatized by their sons' fate.

Likewise, #PendekarTangan Satu was also very unsure about his own future as Indonesia historically does not offer equal employment opportunity for *difabel*. #PendekarTanganSatu fortunately belongs to inclusive and supportive sociocultural networks. His workplace offers equal opportunity, and even supported his gaming hobby by organized *Mobile Legends Bang Bang* competitions which #PendekarTanganSatu competed in and won. His association with E-Sports Ability Indonesia helped to build a

discourse of disability identities which is oriented on solidarity and empowerment; thus, transitioning positively from individual with impairment to *difabel*.

Despite multiplicity of discursive identities among research participants, there are two similarities in discourses among research participants. The first is social construction of disability as main discourse. They identify themselves as *difabel* subjectively through inward thinking of making meaning of the world based on their bodily features, interests and kinships (Siebers, 2014, 2017). While they desire accessibilities and more civilised relationship with non-disabled, said accessibilities must set out from needs and expectations of *difabel* individuals. Research participants wish non-disabled to act as facilitators instead of overseers in developing accessibilities for *difabel* gamers and communities in general.

Their shared agreements are rooted on political awakening of subjective disabled identity (Charlton, 2000; Putnam, 2005; Siebers 2014, 2017). Political awakening requires *difabel* to develop worldview based on their distinctive subjective experiences (Siebers, 2017) and awareness of asymmetrical power relations between disabled culture and non-disabled culture (Charlton, 2000; Putnam, 2005; Thohari, 2012). Life in a disabled culture is one of struggles against hegemony of non-disabled culture and cultural inarticulation (Charlton, 2000; Putnam, 2005; Thohari, 2012; Siebers, 2014; 2017). Participants' worldviews are influenced by their awareness of cultural contestation between *difabel* and non-disabled.

Shena, Marvel and Dodi as members of E-Sports Ability Indonesia firmly believe that through affirmative accesses, *difabel* and non-disabled are equal. Pseudonym Adam considers the worldview of *difabel* is as mundane as non-disabled; due to his refusal to perceive his physical feature as a deviance (Charlton, 2000). Afdhal also shares Adam's sentiment about rejection of *difabel*'s peculiarity as he considers himself to be no different than his peers and relatives who are non-disabled. Afdhal's discourse of disability's identity as a normalcy is supported by Nisrina and Yoga who add that accessibility is important to minimize potential of alienation. For #PendekarTanganSatu, disability identity is a migrated identity which he has at least superficially come to term with due to community support.

## **Study of identities**

E-Sports Ability Indonesia's disability culture revolves around their use of competitive mobile games, especially *Player Unknown Battleground Mobile (PUBGM)*. EAI was formed to accommodate deaf *PUBGM* players who had previously, sporadically interacted with fellow deaf players from various cities and towns on Java island. While the game itself is generally non-accommodative for *difabel* players, various local chapters of *PUBG Tuli (PUBG Deaf)* invented ingenious tactics to play the game competitively as a collective based on their ability as deaf players. *PUBG Tuli* play *PUBGM* in a circular seating formation instead of the usual horizontal line. The purpose of this formation is to ease *PUBG Tuli* players to communicate with each other using sign language. Additionally, excessive use of audio and intensive oral conversation are discouraged as they have strong potential to distract deaf players.



The aim of E-Sports for Everyone was to broaden the sociocultural network of *difabel* in Indonesia, and for that purpose, E-Sports Ability Indonesia invited *difabel* gamers to participate at the event. This was proven to be challenging as Indonesian *difabel* gamers were disorganized as teams and competitors. The online registration for E-Sports for Everyone showed a partial picture of how *difabel* in Indonesia are grossly excluded from contemporary urban life. Shena and Marvel argued that many *difabel* who were interested in applying for the event had little understanding of gaming terminologies and English language in general. More importantly, *difabel* participants had very little organizational experiences and could not easily understand simple and common practices such as online application. This condition is related to *difabel* exclusion from Indonesian formal education (Rakhmat, 2019). An organizational training from education institute is, therefore, rarely available to be undertaken by *difabel*. Thus limiting *difabel*'s opportunity to receive essential skills.

For pseudonym Adam who has been interacting with digital games and gaming community since he was a toddler, digital games shape his worldview and constructions of identity. Despite his difference in physical features, Adam does not consider himself to be different from most of his gaming peers who are non-disabled. Interacting with digital games have been beneficial for Adam in circumventing limitations as result of his physical differences and in developing meaningful relationship with individuals and groups outside of his next to kin. Despite his disability, Adam refused to be pitied and shows strong affirmation toward meritocracy of digital games.

Digital games' roles in constructing of pseudonym Adam's identity as *difabel* contrast those of E-Sports Ability Indonesia. Whereas E-Sports Ability Indonesia attempt to increase visibility and distinctiveness of disabled identity in scope of digital gaming culture, Adam attempts to integrate it. Adam states that interacting with digital games make him feel 'normal' because he does not deliberately attempt to emphasize his disability. He believes that gaming community do not discriminate individuals based on their physical features and/or mental capacity but instead will assess how well they can understand gaming conventions and work together as a team. He also does not seem to have problems with potential ableist view of his gaming community as he recounts that they are always being considerate around him and that he does not have control on what his peers think or feel.

By not putting his *difabel* identity on the forefront, pseudonym Adam has managed to readjust himself with the collective identity of his gaming community which was assisted by his considerable skills in interacting with digital games; both technically and socially. For Adam, *difabel* identity in digital gaming is a matter of fitting in to the dominant non-disabled culture to fulfil their expectation. This occurs because of three factors. Firstly, Adam's disability is not clearly apparent. He recounts that his peers only know that he is a *difabel* after they become closer. Consequently, Adam's disability does not generate a vulgar prejudice which hamper his abilities to function and to gain acceptance in non-disabled dominant society. Previous two points are supported by the final point which is Adam's own unwillingness to perceive that *difabel* is oppressed, thus rejecting the notion of objectification. Pseudonym Adam's identity as a *difabel* is a highly subjective affair which is influenced by his meritocratic engagement with digital games and his lack of participation in an inclusive gaming environment.

Digital games also play large roles in formulizing Afdhal's *difabel* identity in domestic domain. Like pseudonym Adam, Afdhal's peer relationships are built through interactions with digital games. But Afdhal was also influenced domestically by his older brother who played digital games and of whom Afdhal picked the activity from. Afdhal also provides accounts of how his parents moderately supported his gaming activities but were generally cautious of what they perceived to be a negative effect for their son. Afdhal also has experience in digital games competition on local scale in *Pro Evolution Soccer* and *Point Blank*. Afdhal's bond with his family and friends are facilitated by digital games, and so was his disabled worldview. Afdhal's deafness is offset by his visual perception and cognitive capabilities, and he learned many about objects and phenomenon in real world through their simulations in digital games. For example, Afdhal explicitly explained that he learned about firearms from playing *Point Blank*. He also learned how to communicate effectively; and confidently, through texts with his gaming friends.

The virtual room of digital games provides Afdhal with socializing space to broaden his social circle through chat room feature. Their interactions on chat room were often developed into real world activity. Afdhal's gaming peers would know about his deafness, but they did not make derogatory comments or acted negatively on that. Afdhal does not explicitly endorse the discourse of collective consciousness for *difabel* empowerment, but he acknowledges that his *difabel* identity is formulated through interaction with digital games. Finally, he is content of his identity as a *difabel* within a non-disabled sociocultural network.

*#PendekarTanganSatu* does not regard the role of digital games in regaining his lost spirit following the accident and amputation as miraculous in any way—he emphasizes the support of his family, community, and peers. However, gaming was an important factor which empowers him to accept his new minority identity. Despite legal statute that ensure equal opportunity (Pramana, 2018), *difabel* are practically social pariahs in Indonesia (Thohari, 2012; Rakhmat, 2019). *#PendekarTanganSatu* found this particularly troubling, as he was born as non-disabled, and lived as non-disabled for over twenty years while enjoyed ableist sociocultural privileges. Through playing *Mobile Legends Bang Bang* with only one hand, *#PendekarTanganSatu* realized that adaptation to *difabel* lifestyle was far from impossible. *#PendekarTanganSatu*'s engagements with *Mobile Legends Bang Bang* also connected him with E-Sports Ability Indonesia which further helped him to share and exchange idea in an inclusive network.

## CONCLUSION

Four research participants exhibit distinctive discourses and identities as *difabel*. Members of E-Sports Ability Indonesia, in particular, expresses objective discourse with clear visions, goals and code of conducts as collective.

This indicates a formation of collective consciousness and inclusive gaming environment in a clear cultural boundary. E-sport Ability Indonesia's most significant contribution is in introducing an inclusive gaming environments. They have potentials to gain more attention from general publics and stakeholders. Also, identity as a *difabel* must come from within. The diversity of identity illustrated above is a strong indicator that Indonesian gamers are aware about issues on disability in contemporary urban society. Those issues are interpreted differently. Despite what might be seen as indifference or spitefulness, participants demonstrate shared

agreements that attitude and actions of *difabel* must start from the inside. Passively waiting for helping hands is a sign of ignorance.

Finally, digital games are more than just entertainment devices for *difabel*. They are both conduits for social interaction and worldview development. This paper shows that *difabel* gamers relate with digital games in a genuine and sustainable manners that may not be attainable by serious games which are designed specifically for *difabel* --- by non-disabled. We would like to conclude this paper by stating that empowerment which starts from *difabel* for *difabel* is long overdue, and only through non-disabled's willingness to take a step back will we ever achieve equality.

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