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Village facilitators' professional competency in the era of disruption: A case study in Malang Regency, Indonesia

Muhammad Khoirul Fatihin[a,*,†]**, Bambang Budi Wiyono**[b,†]**, M. Ishaq**[a]**, Zulkarnain**[a]**, Sucipto**[a]

[a] *Department of Non Formal Education, Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, East Java 65145, Indonesia*
[b] *Department of Educational Administration, Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, East Java 65145, Indonesia*

Article Info

Abstract

Facilitators that serve to facilitate the attainment of SDGs are needed. That facilitators need to upgrade their skills in order to meet the societal needs in the era of disruption as developing creativity and critical thinking skills is deemed essential to capitalizing on the information technology for life constitutes a challenge. This research is aimed at finding out the needs that the facilitators have for competency in the disruptive era. Qualitative approach was employed with semi-structured interviews conducted to elicit information from 11 participants. The research findings revealed that facilitators who learned about their needs for competency in the era of disruption were enabled to provide hand-holding support to society. Understanding the digital literacy streamlined the finding of learning sources and the utilization of technology for developing the capacity through the ability to conduct social analyses, design educational activities and trainings that tailored social learning opportunities to the needs for the skill development. Understanding the economy enabled facilitators to spot an opportunity in developing asset and community potential-based local economy. Having the ability to plan and manage a program would ensure the programs be effective and collaboration of various parties facilitate the attainment of development goal more quickly. These findings offer benefits to the stakeholders such as the policy makers, facilitators, and other parties who are concerned about human capital building in the villages.

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* Corresponding author.
  E-mail address: muhammad.khoirul.2101419@students.um.ac.id (Fatihin, M. K.).
† Co-first authors.

Introduction

Villages contribute largely to the Indonesian national development in that 74 percent of the national attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been attributed to village contribution (Ibnu, 2020). To deal with global challenges and social changes in society in the disruptive era, facilitators find it necessary that they make adjustment in the strategies they are about to adopt to accomplish the targets of SDGs. As such, this goads the human capital building sector to work on continuous improvement and rectify the environmental shortcomings (Freire, 2005; Ife, 2016). Revamping village development management and rural development should be carried out in various aspects such as planning, organizing, implementing and controlling (Tarlani & Sirajuddin, 2020). Through participatory village planning, the community will be provided a dialogical space for involvement and joining the effort to contribute to rural development. Therefore, the community should develop an ability to partake in the development process (Etuk et al., 2013).

Two major paradigms are prevalent in terms of the village development, "Developing Village and Village Develops" (Tarlani & Sirajuddin, 2020). "Village Develops is a philosophical paradigm of a bottom-up development that the development takes place with the grassroots as the initiators. This unequivocally affects the readiness of the society and the local government to prepare adequate social process and infrastructure. The societal participation is a prerequisite for a bottom-up development that is frequently taken as a formality attempt, yet substantially, the society is not involved (Sucipto et al., 2024). On the other hand, the society might not be ready for involvement due to the insufficient capacity to do so. Therefore, the functionality of facilitators is needed to meet both of the requirements in seeking to actively facilitate the community from the planning, implementation, supervising, evaluation stages and accelerate the progress of the village development by the adoption of various means that result in village community's independence and innovativeness from a convergence of external factors and optimized local resources by properly taking into account social, economic and environmental sectors (Morse & McNamara, 2013; Rantamäki & Kattilakoski, 2019; Suswanto et al., 2018).

To the very end, facilitators should seek to fully grasp the concepts and the practices of sustainable development that they may play their catalytic role in assisting the community toward the achievement of sustainable development goals through the efforts they make in developing villages, understanding the substance and the practices of SDGs implementation at the village level, and utilizing digital technology in planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting of development in the era of disruption. The key to managing and mediating the social process with the stakeholders in achieving sustainable development goals is facilitation (Ingram et al., 2020). One of the keys to streamlining the achievement of sustainable development goals is the quality of the conduct of the village assistance or facilitation. Positive contribution to the collective agreement and local innovation for enhancing the quality of life and community capacity building is unequivocally inhibited by the lack of participatory process (Jarernpanit, 2022). Facilitators have not maxed out their roles in developing participatory empowerment programs and frameworks. They have not built on the strength of partnership of the stakeholders nor engaged in a solidly coordinated work (Suswanto et al., 2018) that lead to the prevailing issues of the government capacity, where the lack of community participation and human resource productivity require appropriate management of resources, local assets, and community participation (Taylor et al., 2023). Generally speaking, policy formulation and the implementation of community assistance have not been up to par. Facilitators' performance requires undergirding for optimized community assistance, particularly in terms of securing community participation in the regional development to consolidate position and knowledge that will prompt the achievement of community-centered sustainable village development. This research focuses on identifying facilitators' professional competency required to extend village community assistance in an era of disruption. Therefore, this article contributes to in-depth knowledge regarding the facilitators' professional competency in developing villages in the disruptive era that drives constant endeavor for the accomplishment of sustainable development goals by taking into consideration the participation and ability of the local people. The contribution to the community development practices is manifested in the findings of the types of competency implemented in the process of facilitating through participatory collaboration and utilization of information technology as the learning source. The relevance of the research lies in the fact that the facilitators' competency ties the knot into the global and societal needs in order to conduct proper facilitation.

Methodology

This research employed qualitative approach in delving into the topic regarding the process of village community assistance by employing a semi-structured interview in eliciting the data. In this research, the researcher intended to scrutinize the competency of professional assistants or so-called facilitators who served to empower and build the rural community.

To answer the research questions, the data were gleaned from in-depth interviews over the span from May to November 2023. Purposive sampling was selected to identify participants that met with criteria to be informants based on their position and extent of knowledge regarding the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Professional assistants in Malang Regency comprising the experts, village facilitators, and local facilitators were interviewed as the subjects, 9 people altogether. Three people serving as the head of villages who were simultaneously in charge of the development and worked alongside with the facilitators were interviewed to corroborate the quality of the data. This interview was focused on the facilitators' competency in facilitating the development and empowerment of the villagers. Observation was conducted to obtain data pertaining to challenges that facilitators faced in rendering assistance to the village community. Documentation study was carried out by collecting secondary data encompassing the supporting policy, guidelines, and other relevant documents related to the research topic.

The analyses of the data were undertaken throughout the data collection process and after all data were gathered as well. The researcher sought to collect data to a great extent to ensure the saturation and credibility of the data were adequate to answer the research questions. The research employed the Miles & Huberman model interactive in analyzing the data. The first process dealt with the collection of the data through interviews, observation, and documentation. Once the data were collected, the data reduction process was initiated to distil the data through classification according to the research focus. Then the data were presented in the narrative form. Conclusion drawing and verification came at the end to conclude the data obtained and classified according to the research focus (Gall et al., 2014; Miles et al., 2018). Adherence to ethical procedure ensured that participants' approval was sought and their rights had been clarified to retain anonymity and protect their confidentiality. Participation was voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw from the research at any point in time.

Results and Discussion

In this context, community development facilitators worked with the community to discover needs and goals, and aid in implementing strategies to achieve sustainable development goals. In order to meet community expectations, it is vital that facilitators enhance their capacity and competency in terms of professional development aimed at capitalizing on knowledge, skills and strategies to empower the community effectively (Schiller & Dorner, 2023). To ensure the effective implementation of the village community assistance, it is of necessity that the village facilitators develop various competencies and adaptability. The research results reveal seven core competencies that facilitators need to develop in going about their work in assisting the village community in the era of disruption as presented in Figure 1.
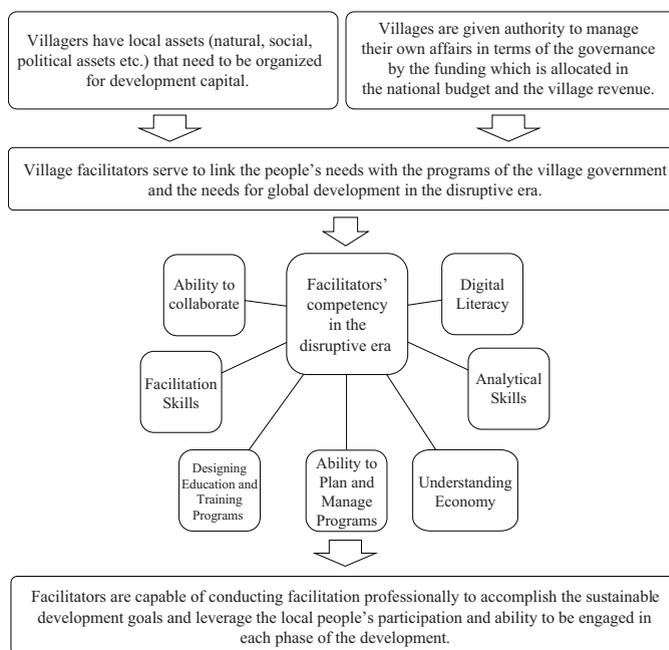

Figure 1 Facilitators' competency in facilitating the villagers in the disruptive era

Digital Literacy

The ability to understand the era of disruption is paramount to enable facilitators to respond and adapt to changes. One of the abilities essential to be developed in the era of disruption is digital literacy. Digital literacy skills enable village communities to swiftly access information, locate learning resources easily, and benefit them to develop life skills and capitalize

on knowledge and foster creativity in navigating the digital environment with confidence as a source of critical information (Naufal, 2021; Peng & Yu, 2022). The result of the interview upholds the statement as follows:

> *"Village facilitators who have developed digital literacy skills and effectively put them to use are able to expedite village assistance provision through the utilization of the technology as learning resources and reference sources to generate creative ideas in expanding knowledge in terms of village development."*

(WW, personal communication, May 11, 2023).

The realization of the village development process hinges only on the adequacy of the community capacity. The needs for the capacity building can be met through knowledge sharing including the community learning activities through various programs or activities that derive learning resources from tapping into digital literacy skills. In the era of disruption, digital literacy skills have an effect on creative thinking skills in tackling challenges and finding innovative solutions to indispensable necessities (Karunarathne & Calma, 2024). Creativity is instrumental in advancing the community by embracing mind-set shifts to be more flexible and open-minded to changes. Accessible information technology can serve as an easy- to- find source of reference and enable the village community to adopt a development program to be involved in dynamic social life (Ginting et al., 2021). It, however, is worth our attention that community development programs cannot be carried out merely by copying and pasting. It is necessary to pay heed to distinct conditions and capacity that differ from locality to locality in such a way that the development will be effectively carried out. The digital literacy skill acquisition enables facilitators to assist the community in scaling up their livelihood opportunities through job diversification in the era of disruption. Reinforcement is carried out through developing the capacity of households who are well-versed in digital literacy for ease of doing businesses and encouraging households to conduct a simple market research (Wardana et al., 2023)

Having acquired digital literacy skills facilitators will be better prepared to meet the demands and challenges in the era of disruption. They will be able to empower village communities to adapt to changes, take advantage of opportunities, and continue to improve the quality of their life in the midst of prevailing fickle changes. Digital literacy skills allow facilitators to discover and adopt ideas to innovate and locate learning resources and capitalize on technology to support sustainable development programs in the era of disruption.

Designing Education and Training Programs

The ability to design education and training programs allow facilitators to contribute to village human resource development, particularly those required to build the community capacity. This ability, in the first instance, deals with identifying the learning needs at the village level (Browne, 2024; Robinson, 2017). Village human resource development is made possible through the participatory design of educational and training activities that involve elements of the community. The results of the interview support the findings, as follows:

> *"The process of providing assistance or facilitation has largely to do with educational and learning experiences of the village community in that professional assistants require the ability to design education and trainings for the village community and village government to enhance the capacity and readiness to develop the village independently. Instead of being stuck on the designing, it should proceed to the developing of carrying out and evaluating the educational activities and trainings for the village human development."*

(WW, personal communication, May 11, 2023).

It is necessary that facilitators should have the ability to plan concrete measures to accomplish educational or training objectives including technical skills to elaborate lesson plans, teaching materials, evaluation procedure. Program and curriculum planning engages many parties in the endeavour to consider varied views of the community and stakeholders to ensure mutual support in creating quality education in practice for the community strengthening of local community participation programs as a local wisdom-based source of learning (Mausch et al., 2021; Wiyono et al., 2021). This is deemed as a vital part of sustainable endeavour to create a community of learners that John Dewey dreamed of.

Providing quality education for the rural community and ensuring that no one is left behind through the implementation of SDGs and life-long learning are made possible by the enactment of community learning centre (Rogers, 2019; UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning [UIL], 2019). Having the aforementioned mix of skills will enable facilitators to design effective and relevant education and training programs that could

have a far-reaching and positive impact on the village community. Paying heeds to participatory and sustainable principles in designing and implementing education programs at the village level will ensure sustainability.

Analytical Skills

Facilitators' analytical skills are crucial to identifying problems, devising solutions and measuring the impact of the development program implemented. Those skills include the ability to comprehend and analyse relevant data regarding the village such as the statistics, the village sustainable development goal data, Rural Development Index, Human Development Index, Public Health Development Index, community surveys, data obtained from field research or other pertinent information. The results of the interview conducted support the findings as follows:

> *"Professional assistants in providing facilitation or assistance to the community should seek to conduct a comprehensive analysis on the data. For this, it requires the ability to collect, analyse, and interpret the data and information in the community. This is going a long way to help them go about their work in identifying problems, opportunities, trends that would serve to guide and propel them to innovate in carrying out their job as village facilitators."*
>
> (AK, personal communication, June 16, 2023).

It is imperative that facilitators have the ability to identify problems and recognize opportunities by analysing a village's particular conditions to define its problems and grasp the underlying causes thereof in a participatory and comprehensive manner. By the virtue of participatory identification, they will gain in-depth understanding of the causes of poverty and inequality and capture the opportunities for environmental sustainability. Village facilitation puts an emphasis on the efforts to encourage village institutions to work towards becoming more active and dynamic. It thus takes continuous learning on the part of facilitators to be able to identify what a community needs. Then the facilitators need to develop their ability further to conduct social analyses that provide input for planning and devising education and community empowerment programs. Facilitating community learning strategy consists of three stages, educating, acting, and advocating (Fatihin et al., 2021). To gather the data, active listening and closely interacting with the community are crucial as these constitute one of the skills that facilitators need to

develop to gather comprehensive data and information on the problems confronted. The community potential, as a whole, is worth considering as part of life-long learning that plays an important part in the empowering endeavor. This shows that SDGs-4 (quality education) retains the potential of creating impactful development and affecting other goals (Carr et al., 2018; Friedman, 2023).

Drawing on the ability of analysing conditions, problems, potentials and assets of the community properly and objectively enables facilitators to generate valid and profound information, make needs-based decisions, devise effective programs and contribute positively to the village community development.

Facilitation Skills

In the context of village community assistance, facilitation skills are crucial for leading a dialogue, coordinating and implementing development program. Facilitators need to acquire the ability to recognize the needs of the community through participatory forum and dialogue in which village community is engaged to listen to and understand the felt needs, aspirations, and priorities of the community. Effective participatory decision-making can boost the quality of a community's social development and democracy (Jarernpanit, 2022). Underrepresented groups should be given more opportunities in order to be better engaged in the development (Browne, 2024). Therefore, participation is primarily instrumental in getting the community engaged to actively contribute to the development where they live. The results of the interview support the findings as follows:

> *"In the community development activities, participatory context is of increasing importance to be attended to in encouraging the community to be aware of their roles as the development practitioners and facilitators to provide support and guidance through fairly and democratically-run participatory activities."*
>
> (YM, personal communication, May 12, 2023).

Facilitation skills are essential to afford the community opportunities to get involved and convey ideas and concepts for the achievement of SDGs. Through such activities as these, facilitators are able to orchestrate work agenda and structure social learning relevant to village community assistance. Social learning constitutes a part of the learning process which is an important factor in the attainment of the sustainable development goals

(Akbar et al., 2020). The push for collaboration between the government and civil society toward the achievement of sustainable development goals is made possible through the provision of learning opportunities (Rogers, 2019). Facilitators bear the main responsibility for assisting a community group to raise its effectiveness through improved process and structure (Schwarz et al., 2011). Facilitation skills are needed to encourage community development through the acquisition of the ability to design and facilitate the provision of trainings or capacity-building towards the deepening of skills and knowledge. Facilitators' competency in this respect will serve to fashion the understanding and participatory method application in planning and decision-making as well as securing active and inclusive participation of all elements of the village community through the facilitative framework provided. This is paramount to improve knowledge and skills in terms of problem-solving skill and empowerment. The participation of all the elements of the community is facilitated through various deliberation activities such as village assembly (Musdes), and development planning assembly (Musrenbang) for the ideation of development to be implemented by the village (Suherman et al., 2020). Having good facilitation skills, facilitators could serve as "the main mobilizers "in amplifying the community's participation, reaching consensus and raising the effectiveness of development programs based on the societal needs.

Understanding Economy

Facilitators should understand economy particularly in the era of disruption when technological transformation and global dynamics could exert an effect on the local economy. Facilitators' ability to analyse and make sense of the impact of the technological transformation and global trends on the local economy of the village contribute to understanding on how disruption could affect the livelihood and the village economic structure. The results of the interview uphold the research findings as follows:

> *"Professional Assistants need to have a good grasp of basic economics and market. This helps them facilitate the community in learning to develop their small-scale household businesses to improve their standard of living."*
>
> (FM, personal communication, June 16, 2023).

Understanding the role of technology in enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of village economy enables facilitators to contribute to the community development and strengthen its competence to assist village community in identifying and promoting the sustainable economy opportunities through green economy practices. Developing rural areas into tourist villages have now become alternative local economy development (Tyas & Damayanti, 2018). Environment-based village tourism and community-based tourism take into account the quality of individuals, family, community, and sustainable environment which are to be developed through village tourism potential management. This is effective to empower the community through the practice of green economy toward the accomplishment of sustainable economic, social and environmental development (Febriandhika & Kurniawan, 2019). Green economy is basically instrumental in the achievement of goals and constitutes a great stride toward integrated development strategy in achieving dynamic and evolutionary sustainable development. This is beneficial to address the risk and ecological scarcity through the enhanced well-being and social justice (Adamowicz, 2022; Daniek, 2020; Hussien et al., 2016; Victor & Jackson, 2012).

Facilitators should have the ability to encourage the community to gain understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the local economy as well as devising strategies to raise competitiveness through the development of village superior products. Understanding both national and local economy policy could help the village government plan a policy that supports economic self-reliance and strengthen village local economy institution through the Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes). BUMDes is established as a social and economic organization to promote self-reliant initiatives and extend comfort to rural community (Ihsan & Setiyono, 2018). The sustainability of BUMDes is crucial to determining the success of the economic development program at a village level through the amplification of local services and autonomy (Mustakangas & Vihinen, 2024; Rares et al., 2023).

Facilitators stand a chance of developing their skills in fostering collaboration and partnership with private sectors, government and other organizations to support the village economic initiatives and increase understanding of how to utilize resources to strengthen local economies. Having a strong grasp of the economy in the era of disruption, facilitators could help the village community to deal with changes in a better way, take advantage of new sustainable economic opportunities and raise assets and potentials- based economic security.

Ability to Collaborate

It is imperative that facilitators acquire the skill to come into collaboration especially in the era of disruption when changes transpire so rapidly and the complexity of challenges require solid cooperation from various parties. Understanding the collaborative ecosystem that is essential to facilitating the community in this age includes the roles of a wide range of stakeholders such as public sector, private sector, and civil society. This finding is supported by the results of the interview revealing that:

> *"Facilitators' ability to work together with a wide variety of stakeholders such as public sector, private sector, and civil society is of great help in ramping up the efforts to enact village development and expand the access to resources outside the region."*
>
> (NM, personal communication, June 29, 2023).

To sustain the partners' engagement and ensure the continued progress toward sustainability of the community, a partnership design is needed (MacDonald et al., 2018). This gives rise to the needs for facilitators' ability to manage the strengths and resources to streamline the village development through the attainment of village SDGs as well as through the acquisition of ability to come into and foster mutually beneficial partnership across a rural community's sustainable livelihood by creating new local knowledge that links knowledge and learning in such a way that encourages bottom-up initiatives for social and economic development of the rural community (Chiangmai, 2017).

Fasilitating collaboration among the stakeholders is crucial to ensure that there will be a unified vision on effective collaboration method and attempt to create interconnected elements to extend the collaboration opportunities in a wide range of sectors inter alia, through the inter-village cooperation and the optimized inter-village cooperation agency (BKAD) and Joint Village-owned Enterprise (BUMDesma). The ability to build effective networks with a wide variety of people even in the broader community, plays a pivotal role. Coming into collaboration with various parties can be streamlined by facilitators' willingness to adapt to changes and seek innovative measure of collaborative solution. External parties will play a great role in an optimal manner as facilitators as well as motivators when they work to encourage the village capacity development and potential management (Firman, 2021). Skillful facilitators afford opportunities to learn, grow and make decisions that encourage the community

to carry on alternative learning through non-formal education as a means of enhancing their well-being (Maikowati, 2019).

Understanding the policy and regulations pertinent to the village development will help facilitators to work within the framework of applicable policy and foster collaboration in accordance with the regulations and societal needs. With the ability to collaborate, a facilitator can create a synergy among various parties, buttress the implementation of the development program and enhance the resilience of rural community in the era of disruption.

Ability to Plan and Manage Programs

It is imperative that facilitators develop a mastery of planning and management skills in terms of the community development program especially in the era of disruption when changes take place so rapidly and the complexity of situations demand a more structured and adaptive approach. This ability is essential to scrutinize the situational development and the context of the village community needs that the planning and management of community empowerment program is expected to meet. This competency has largely to do with the ability to formulate clearly-defined strategy plans including the goal setting, indicators of success, strategic program management steps as well as the ability to make responsive and flexible plans in response to the situational changes. The results of the interview support the findings as follows:

> *"Professional Assistants 'Planning and Management skills' encompass planning, implementing, managing, evaluating, and measuring the extent of the village development program in addition to the ability to plan program management, implementation techniques, the budget needed, resource management, and measure the impact of development on the life of the community."*
>
> (WW, personal communication, May 14, 2023).

Facilitators' ability to detect problems and engage the community in evaluating and establishing performance indicators is paramount to measuring to what extent the success is achieved or hindered in terms of the program utilization. The prevalent main approaches to the village development concept comprise top down and bottom up approach. Facilitators need to make sure that the community gets heard, produce innovative solution, value and acknowledge that the community has the

potential in fulfilling their needs and the ability to engage in productive endeavours independently and in association with others in order to solve problems (Gao, 2016; Tarlani & Sirajuddin, 2020). Community development practices are performed to resolve a wide range of societal issues particularly in coping with the physical, environmental, social and economic dimensions of the societal system (Grant & Hains, 2023; Sung & Phillips, 2016). As such, it takes an ability to manage the available resources in the community effectively to empower the community.

The local people's initiatives play a primary role in the instrumentality of the societal development through the enhanced knowledge and skills for engagement in the entirety of the systematic and sustainable program (Budiantoro & Syauqi, 2022). The management comprises planning, implementing, and evaluating as the manifestation of the local authority of the village in directing and taking charge of the village development to provide opportunities for the development of leadership for village cadets toward the improvement of the knowledge, leadership skills, motivation, and networks. Having reasonable program planning and management skills enables facilitators to ensure the success and measure the positive impact of the village development and stay adaptive to the emerging dynamics and challenges in the era of disruption.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Facilitators' ability to understand digital literacy empowers the community to find and adopt innovativeness, locate learning resources, and capitalize on the technology in supporting sustainable community development in the era of disruption. Facilitators' skills in the design of effective and relevant education and training program by paying attention to participatory and sustainable principles could reinforce knowledge for the fulfilment of the needs. The ability to analyze the conditions, problems, potentials, and assets of the community properly and objectively helps facilitators generate valid and in-depth knowledge as a basis of the decision making for effective program planning. Good facilitation skills enable facilitators to be 'mobilizers' in ramping up societal participation, creating consensus, and enhancing the effectiveness of development programs. The ability to understand global and local economy enables facilitators to help the village community to deal with changes in a better way, take advantage of sustainable economic opportunities, and improve the village

community's assets and potentials-based local economic security in the era of disruption. Engaged in robust collaboration, facilitators can create synergy between various parties, ramp up the program implementation, and improve village community resilience in the era of disruption. And by having good program planning and management skills, facilitators are capable of ensuring that success is achieved and measuring to what extent the development positively impacts the village, as well as staying adaptive to the possible emerging dynamics and challenges in the era of disruption.

It is recommended that development program and village community empowerment facilitators take advantage of these competencies as references to the work of community facilitation. To be fully aware of their needs for competency in the era of disruption, facilitators are enabled to go about their job in facilitating the community in a more effective way by constantly considering the employment and reinforcement of local community capacity to contribute to the regional development.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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