

Exploring Cultural Identity: Perspectives from Social Sciences and Humanities

Perspectives on barriers to Social Inclusion (SI) for disabled individuals in the performing arts

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Abstract Recently, there has been a rising acknowledgment of the significance of social inclusion (SI) for people with disabilities. SI is the active involvement and engagement of all persons in society's social, cultural, economic, and political elements. It includes equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources, as well as the removal of obstacles that prevent full participation. While the capacity of the arts to foster SI is recognized, impediments to SI for disabled individuals in the arts remain under researched. The paper identifies barriers to SI for inactivated individuals among the performing arts between four dimensions, according to 34 semi structured interviews with people with disabilities and people from the four arts who are not disabled. The study supports the social model of disability by highlighting societal barriers that are being constructed with smaller consideration toward the requirements of individuals having disabilities. The findings demonstrate that disabled people can gain from the arts and develop into more approachable, engaged, creative self-expressers, and voices. Beyond the social inclusion of individuals with impairments in the arts, they also have other consequences. Our approach conceptualizes these four obstacles to management changing so that disabled individuals may participate in society.

Keywords: barriers, Social Inclusion (SI), disabilities, individuals, performing arts

1. Introduction

Historically, the inclusion of community assets or services that are open to all residents and are part of a growing network of links among individuals, including and excluding intellectual difficulties, are two ways in which people with intellectual disabilities can be socially included. According to data on the participation of disabled pupils, the likelihood that they will attend school in inclusive settings varies depending on their level of impairment (Bigby & Wiesel 2019). SI improves the well-being and quality of life of both the general public and the ID groups. Social roles, community involvement, and involvement in personal connections all fall under the category of SI. It could be characterized by a sense of community and work to foster possibility and inclusion. It is a societal idea that may change based on an individual's surroundings. It is also subjective and dynamic (McCausland et al 2021). In many spheres of society, including education, work, health, social involvement, and community integration, individuals and groups may suffer from SI. A major concern facing policymakers, practitioners, and society is addressing social exclusion, often by fostering SI (Schaillee et al 2019). Providing equal opportunities, participation, and access to the performing arts for individuals with disabilities is a practice and attitude that SI for individuals with disabilities in the performing arts. It is a dedication to fostering an atmosphere that is varied and inclusive and that values the skills, viewpoints, and achievements of people with disabilities in all facets of the performing arts (Wang & Wu, 2023). The SI of handicapped individuals has become a significant management and policy challenge. However, SI is not only dependent on wealth or poverty (Hashimy, 2023).

Amazingly, little scholarly and sector interest in arts and disabilities has increased. However, disability policy encourages SI, and several government agencies are doing research in collaboration with arts organizations. Evidence reveals that the arts, which include visual, acting, and literary forms and range from elite to community arts, lead to the SI of people as a medium of expression, for personal growth, and as a method of creative expression that links artists to nearby communities (Schulz et al., 2023). It creates a framework for improved management to comprehend and conceptualize inclusion problems that affect handicapped people and identify critical obstacles to their SI, which is pertinent considering the topic's absence. The structure of the barriers to accessing the SI is shown in Figure 1.

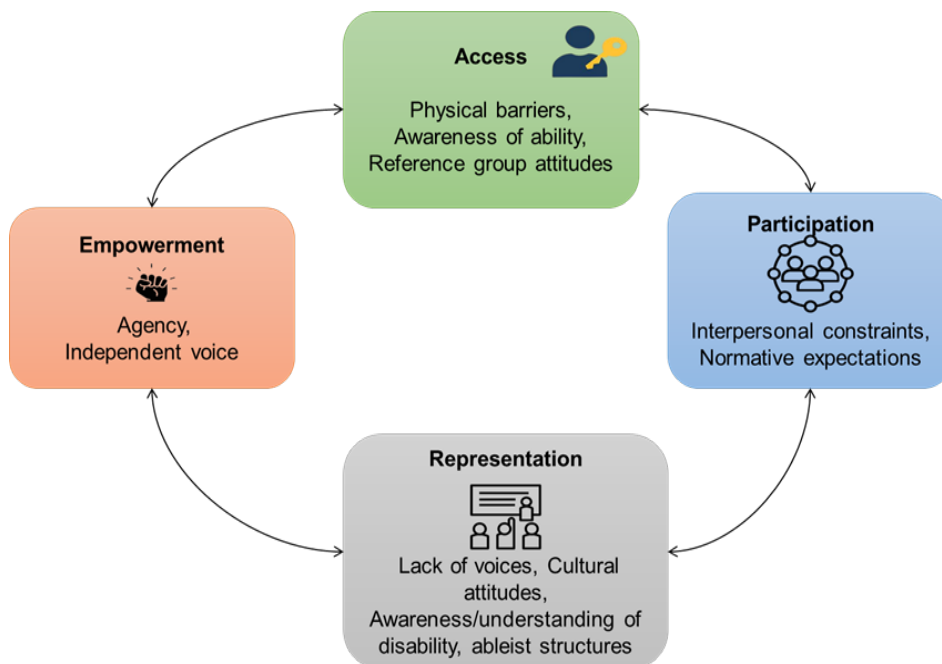


Figure 1 SI Obstacles: Access, Participation, Representation, and Empowerment (APRE).

Although the subject has received little academic attention, SI and the following advantages are plagued by obstacles that may be unequally distributed or unreachable for certain impaired persons. Changes in policy and practice that require an integrated approach to handicapped individuals who focuses on several levels, as discussed in this article, are among the management implications (Leemann et al. 2022). This paper examines the obstacles that prevent handicapped individuals from participating in society and the performing arts in this context. In this paper, we refer to those who are disabled as having a physical, cognitive, or intellectual impairment.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the proposed technique, Section 3 provides the findings and discussion, and Section 4 presents the conclusion of the article.

Goldstein (2023) aimed to comprehend the meanings of SI for persons with visual impairment from four Colombian cities, as well as the family dynamics that support or restrict inclusion processes. Twenty-six semistructured telephone interviews were used in qualitative exploratory research. SI refers to the processes that connect capacity development with opportunity, well-being, social networks, and civic engagement. Buckley et al. (2021) closely examined the attitudes and modifications made by employers in the performing arts and the job experiences of autistic performance artists. While some autistic individuals had access to assistance, most thought that there was not sufficient assistance and listed several ways in which they might be helped more effectively. Kart & Kart (2021) compiled and arranged research on the benefits of inclusion for children without impairments in terms of their academic and social development. The academic consequences of inclusion for children without disabilities are inconsistent, and individuals without disabilities may perform differently depending on their educational background.

Juvonen et al. (2019) provided a critical examination of the obstacles to SI and integration in schools and suggested inclusive educational strategies that foster connections and cooperation among different pupils. The term diversity is used in a wide sense to describe a variety of distinctions among pupils. Toquero (2022) evaluated the legislation of the Philippines pertaining to comprehensive specialized education along with the entitlements of the mentioned learners. In addition, prospective educational techniques to supplement students' understanding throughout an epidemic are highlighted. It proposes legislation as well as programs for disaster preparedness that address socioemotional, mental wellness, and educational requirements for disabled students throughout the pandemic's duration.

Jeziński & Lorek-Jezińska (2022) examined human behavior in the face of unexpected and significant functional and structural alterations caused by the global epidemic, as well as the influence of social and cultural frameworks as well as the mirroring cultural policies that existed prior to and throughout the pandemic. To accomplish that, they contextualize the discussions surrounded by conversations in the conceptual structures of liminalities, vulnerability, instabilities, and resiliency. Pathak & Muralidharan (2022) explored how collective leadership styles and ideals for SI at the societal level affect the engagement of disadvantaged people in entrepreneurship. They also suggest that these two antecedents of underprivileged entrepreneurial activities interact. Focusing on young people is important since ableism rates are often greater within this age group than among older people. Lindsay et al. (2023) examined how ableism and employment discrimination affect teenagers and young adults with disabilities. Focusing on young people is important since ableism rates are often greater within this age group than among older people.

2. Methodology

In this section, we conducted qualitative research to examine, by personal experience, how disabled individuals may be socially included in the performing arts. Along with other stakeholders, the voices of handicapped persons are given prominence. To capture more in-depth participant experiences and comprehend each participant's particular personal and social experiences in a field that is mostly unknown, various studies have highlighted the necessity of using qualitative inquiry while investigating social phenomena. In a similar vein, our research sought to highlight the perspectives of people with and without disabilities by gathering data on their personal experiences.

2.1. Collection of data

Thirty-four semistructured participant interviews were conducted as part of our study. These interviews included (i) disabled viewers (n = 14); (ii) caregivers (n = 4); (iii) disabled players (n = 4); and (iv) investors, which included staff, fundraisers/developers, supervisors, artistic managers, and past and current board members of performing arts organizations, both with and without impairments (n = 12). Table 1 provides a summary of the research findings, information sources, and participant demographics, including gender and the types of disabilities (e.g., hearing, vision, mobility, and multiple impairments). Interviews with employees, disabled performers, and directors were permitted by four arts organizations. The snowball sampling approach was used to identify potential interview subjects from a group of people who had interacted with handicapped people in various jobs.

Table 1 Participants and Data Sources.

Procedure (Semistructured interviews)	Profile	N =34 (1 individual served as a performer and a stakeholder in the organization)	Participants
Organizational stakeholder	6 men 6 women Impairment: Mobile: 1 woman	N =12	These Participants are skilled in the performing arts, including theatre and dance, and they have experience as artistic administrators, managers, and policymakers in many organizations.
Disabled audience members	8 women 6 men Impairment: Mobility: 4 women, 1 man Visual: 2 mens, 1 women Multiple: 1 women Hearing: 3 women	N = 14	These participants attended artistic events and performances.
Caregivers	4 women	N= 4	These participants gained knowledge about obstacles facing handicapped audiences by seeing artistic performances with disabled audiences.
Disabled performers	4 women 1 men Impairment Mobile: 4 women Multiple: 1 men	N = 5	These performers appeared at cultural gatherings.

2.2. Data evaluation

The interview transcripts were first fully reviewed before being manually categorized into themes. We developed an analysis of the first and second orders by categorizing themes as part of a two-stage process for the analysis of data as part of our holistic approach to idea generation. A thematic approach was used for first-level coding. The four dimensions of SI served as the basis for coding in the second order, which used first-order coding themes. The rigor of concept formation and theory building was confirmed by the employment of research voices and researchers in establishing relationships between data and



the induction of new ideas. By elaborating on recognized themes and clarifying details such as the meaning of quotations, many writers have allowed the data analysis step to be comprehensive and reliable.

2.3. Social inclusion

Social inclusion ensures that every member of society has the opportunity, skills, and resources necessary to participate in and profit from local or national growth. According to some, achieving SI may be achieved by taking steps to fulfill the moral responsibility to leave no one behind and prevent the possible negative social and economic effects of exclusion. To ensure that individuals from all backgrounds own the assets, possibilities, and abilities to perform, study, interact, and have a voice, SI is consequently seen as the procedure of creating possibilities for their inclusion. Barack defines SI as giving minority members a level playing field so that they may engage in all socioeconomic activities to the fullest extent possible.

2.4. Dimensions of social inclusion

There is no one definition for SI; instead, it is subject to several interpretations. For the sake of this essay, SI is defined as an operation with four interconnected aspects where each person feels appreciated and has the chance to participate, for instance, via presentations or programs, regardless of whether they have a disability. Scholars have recognized these four dimensions. However, the authors could not find any comprehensive discussions of the four dimensions. Each dimension and its connection to the arts are briefly evaluated in the next section. We acknowledge that these dimensions may overlap even if we analyze them independently. Table 2 provides a summary of these four aspects of SI, which are APRE.

Table 2 Social Inclusion in four dimensions.

Access	Representation	Empowerment	Participation
More activities are being offered	Being vocal Being Hard	Gaining skill Enhancing	Audience
Eliminating physical obstacles in structures and exhibits	How other people talk Concerning persons with disabilities	Independence providing people	Contribution Audience
removing obstacles based on money	being employed for entertainment	Agency to overcome Obstacles Contributing positively through actions	Resources for development and interpretation

3. Results and Discussion

This section discusses the topics that emerged through interviews and provides examples of quotations from the respondents.

3.1. Barriers to social inclusion

There are several obstacles to inclusion, according to the data gathered from the interviews. One of the four guiding principles of SI—access, representation, participation, and empowerment—fits the concerns that have been identified. This section classifies such obstacles and broadens them by assessing other obstacles to inclusion.

3.1.1. Access to Barriers

Accessibility barriers included obstacles, uncertainty, ignorance, and peer group behaviors. Although physical needs for impairments are more recognized, understood, and met than are intellectual needs, physical barriers continue to be the primary barrier preventing people with disabilities from participating in activities or events. There were physical barriers to overcome before the event. For example, there were issues with the number of parking places that were available as well as the size and location of the spaces that were granted. Upon arrival at the event, participants ran across further challenges: Matt, a spectator with mobility impairment, shared his thoughts on seating.

The tiny chairs make this challenging. Your legroom is limited. The seats do not have any back support. There are steps in the historic theatre. When it was created, there were few handicapped individuals around (Matt).

As is clear from Matt's example, preconceived notions about disability are to blame for the realization that physical restrictions exist. Although certain structures are constrained by factors such as space or historical listing, the understanding of obstacles such as those mentioned by Matt needs to be considered. If the obstacle cannot be removed, a substitute may be used. We go into more detail about this when we talk about involvement.

Institutional hurdles included stairs at events and other obstacles. The steps are everywhere, as Bertie, a blind audience member, noted. My biggest worry is usually the ppls. This point of view was further supported by a female audience member who was physically impaired and who attended the event. She stated that the stairs prompted her to "make phone calls and inquiries to make sure you can get to your seat" (Ellen). This is congruent with the social model of disability since barriers to inclusion have been established as a result of insufficient consideration of everyone's needs when designing structures or



interior spaces. Additional research indicates that real-world impediments could disrupt performance. For example, due to intermission's physical demands and theater rules, some impaired viewers are deprived of fundamental necessities such as water.

I have to down the stairs much more slowly now to use the restroom or get a drink at intermission. I therefore do without (Matt).

A lack of participation in intermission restricts possible social connections with other audience members in addition to preventing necessities such as access to water from being met. As a result, obstacles that prevent access also prevent handicapped attendees from growing their social networks, being recognized as active community members, understanding how art is interpreted via human contact, and sharing their perspectives on the event with peers who are not impaired.

3.1.2. Participation difficulties

Similar to access, impediments to participation became a problem that affected everyone involved. Themes pertaining to participation demonstrated how unique a category was in comparison to access. For example, how handicapped persons with access can engage in artistic performances depends on how disability is represented, understood, and exposed. Although participation was not refused and was even encouraged, the provider frequently thought that the way it was done bothered people.

A key problem with impaired participants in the audience participating was their position as second-class citizens, which extended their perceptions of being a hassle. The following statement from Louise, a participant in the audience who has a physical impairment, shows how disrespect may be a barrier since disabled individuals are dismissed and viewed as if they are invisible:

If you are disabled, you might not get respect. Individuals think in different ways. For example, I might approach a ticket counter and ask a question. The individual behind the desk will not address me personally if I have a companion. Employee education and awareness are needed.

The usual requirements of time and jobs also prevented participation. The capacity of a person to perform in a way that is valued by the economy often determines inclusion. When handicapped artists participated in our research, it was often not that they could complete the work that restricted them but rather the timing and method of completion.

According to Moses, you are punished if you cannot begin at nine in the morning.

In summary, attitudes such as ignorance, discrimination, and a lack of information about methods to provide a more inclusive environment for individuals with disabilities comprised the majority of the obstacles to participation. This shows that there is still a long way to go before more handicapped persons may engage in artistic endeavors. To promote the health and well-being of handicapped individuals, the quality of involvement must be prioritized above quantity.

3.1.3. Difficulties with representation

Society is impacted in meaningful ways by the way certain groups are represented. Disability-accepting cultural attitudes are a component of debilitating surroundings that enforce social restrictions above and outside any individual handicap. The loss of voice was another obstacle to participation, in addition to cultural prejudices. We now draw attention to certain important representational inclusion obstacles in this context.

The representation of handicapped people was negatively influenced by staff members' ignorance of the many forms of impairment and capacities and how to manage them, according to both disabled performers and audience members:

In a community of individuals with disabilities, there are many people who do not feel comfortable stating that because then you become the problematic one. You are the princess (Amy).

Disability stakeholders experienced challenges at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels due to an absence of voice or concerns about how their voice might sound. In essence, handicapped people voiced the belief that they are often seen as insufficient or as a burden on society, as noted above. This illustrates the strain or struggles that develop when the structure is disregarded and individually accountable is prioritized. It reflects the presumptions ingrained in a neoliberal society. People with disabilities may not obey society's basic social rules, and their condition often involves pity and disdain. A crippled artistic director was visibly motivated to alter such attitudes.

Living with a disability is not a tragedy, and there is no need to feel sorry for oneself. Instead of sympathy, they think of performers as trained dancers (Mary).

In other words, the difficulty of artistic expression for people with disabilities is shown by this quotation. Disability-related impediments to performing arts participation were a topic that affected more people than just the handicapped persons themselves. For instance, in a conversation with Amy, a handicapped artist, she discussed how ableist norms affect disabled people's experiences at prestigious cultural events such as award ceremonies:

When the actress who took home the prize was called to pick it up, something happened. At that point, they realized, "Oh, she cannot go on stage." She needed to go from the backstage area to the stage. She did not make a spectacular entrance as the others did. She was ostracized. They ought to have given it some consideration. They knew she was one of the finalists.

It is evident she's disabled. She had a reasonable possibility of being successful. The defense was that it would not have gotten any notice from those who built the theater (Amy).

The mentality and viewpoint of society as a whole must be modified to increase the understanding of the challenges experienced by handicapped persons if we are to increase the representation of disabled people. This may be partially accomplished by amplifying the voices of people with disabilities and boosting their presence among influential decision-makers. The results indicate that there is still more work to be done to ensure that representation leads to inclusion for everyone.

3.1.4. Empowerment obstacles

The four principles of social inclusion are interrelated, as was previously mentioned. For example, empowerment was hampered by access restrictions. The performing arts, according to participants such as Muge, a worker in the disability sector, have the power to promote freedom by enhancing physical capacities, educating audiences, and providing training. Although the goals of disability and art have been to frame the use of art as a form of healing and recreation, restricting art to its beneficial effects limits what the practice may provide. Brian, the handicapped director of a group that promotes arts and disabilities, said as much.

All the stakeholder groups discussed the need to increase staff understanding so that they could better accommodate those with disabilities. This will help these individuals overcome obstacles and gain their own power. The greeting and placing of persons in advance, for instance, should be done with respect and inclusion (Louise). These viewpoints were not only reserved for introductions; they were also seen as crucial to the development of the whole artistic experience. According to a blind spectator:

It is important to urge people to reflect on their views and realize that audiences with disabilities have a lot to give when training, in addition to what can physically occur (Bertie).

This and Brian's comments, in sum, show that their art, not their disability, is a fundamental part of who they are and has grown via performance. The fact that handicapped people often find it difficult to express their own demands is another proof of the value of amplifying their voices.

It is challenging for me to express my access requirements. I need to improve on it. However, there are obstacles. Therefore, handicapped artists tend to band together.

According to this research, a barrier to empowerment is how handicapped persons are granted autonomy over their own behavior. People with disabilities desire to share the same rights and possibilities as able-bodied persons. While it is important to recognize that certain disabled people's impairments are an integral part of their identities and a social model constraint when discussing handicapped artists, the artists in our research want to be recognized as artists rather than disabled artists. Understanding how identification for handicapped persons relates to obstacles such as empowerment and representation is difficult and requires further study.

4. Final considerations

The research demonstrates a framework that proposes obstacles to access, and participation, representation, and empowerment are the four broad categories. The authors argued that participation in performing arts activities poses several obstacles for disabled people. This is the first attempt, to the writers' knowledge, to integrate the hurdles into a thorough typological explanatory framework, notwithstanding earlier studies on SI generally and in the arts sector in particular. The APRE framework, in particular, could act as a springboard for future improvement and discussion of the social representation of disability. The challenges associated with the four-dimensional strategy for SI described in this work need to be addressed in future research.

Ethical Considerations

Respondents consented to the carrying out of this research.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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