AUDITING DISABILITY RESEARCH DISCOURSE FROM THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED YOUTHS' PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a part of findings from an exploratory audit which aims to investigate the perspective of visually impaired youths from Asian and the Pacific region on disability research discourse in their own countries. The study utilizes an online survey as a data collection method. 49 research participants from 17 Asian and the Pacific countries participating in the survey. We calculate the average score for each country. We find that Asian and the Pacific countries move at a different pace in terms of the development of disability research discourse. Besides that, our research participants rate differently for different stakeholders' positions on the importance and prioritization of disability research implementation in each country. Furthermore, all research participants from all countries claim to face difficulty in accessing local disability research findings. At the end of this article, we underline some recommendations for regional entities and governments. Though findings from this study cannot be generalized, we hope it encourages further and critical research both at the local and regional level.

Key words: Asian and the Pacific region, disability research, exploratory audit, online survey, visually impaired youths.

INTRODUCTION

> "Rather than experts determining what is best for people, people should use their own lived experience to determine the shape of provision. This is the principle of 'expertise by experience', which accords closely with the key disability movement slogan of 'nothing about us without us'. The corollary of experts by experience is that professionals should be 'on tap but not on top'." (Shakespeare 2018, p. 160).

In general, there are two main overarching agendas in conducting disability-related studies. The first agenda is to assess what global entities and governments call as 'disability prevalence' and the second agenda relates to philosophical and practical knowledge which is the concern of certain individuals and groups (e.g. scholars and activists). Although there is a possible connection between these two agendas, the actors in these spheres and their objectives of doing disability research may not necessarily be linked or progress at the same rate. Yet, there is no denying that disabled people's position in the local knowledge production processes can influence political structures as well as the academy (Barnes, Oliver & Barton 2002; Shakespeare 2018; Oslund 2015).

In the lives of disabled people, data obtained through research can nurture consciousness and understanding among researchers and the public about disabled people's issues, identify the needs of disabled community and solutions for their challenges, advance the knowledge on disability issues, serve as a reference to the government and service providers, develop skills amongst disabled individuals and offer a channel for disabled people to voice out their issues (Nasir & Hussain 2019). These benefits of disability research directly demonstrate the value of disabled people's experiences in the individual, societal, academic and political realms.

In Incheon Strategy To "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and Pacific Region, three core indicators are underlined which are the availability of statistic on the prevalence of disability according to International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF), tracking the progress of achievement of the Incheon Strategy's targets and the availability of disaggregated data on disabled women's inclusion in the governments' programs and services (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2012b). Therefore, disability research production must be encouraged in the Asian and the Pacific countries for disabled people's emancipation alongside achieving the goals of Incheon Strategy.

More than a decade ago, data collection on disabled persons has been put forward as one of the central strategies in the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-Free and Rights-Based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific – also known as the second Asia-Pacific Decade for Persons with Disabilities 2003-2012 (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2003b). According to this regional plan, all countries in the region should have a system to collect and analyze data relating to disabled people in their countries by 2005. The emphasis on the availability and quality of data concerning disabled persons is repeated during the mid-term evaluation of the Biwako Millennium Framework. During the meeting in Bangkok, several new strategies are underlined which among others include action by governments to develop policies or laws to mandate data collection on disabled persons, use population census, adopt innovative data collection methods as well as to conduct policy and program assessment (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2007). However, as we soon discuss in the literature review below, the lack of reliable and comparable data on disabled persons across social, economic, and political dimensions persist. Equally concern and curious about this situation, we initiate an exploratory

study to assess the disability research discourse in the region. Through our young research participants, we want to understand and provide a preliminary overview of this dilemma. This study stems from the previous work of the first author and colleagues (Nasir, Efendi & Hussain 2019; Nasir & Hussain 2019) and our consciousness to promote emancipatory disability research paradigm pioneered by Oliver (1992, 1997, 2002). We want to explore the current progress of disability research discourse in Asian and the Pacific countries from the perspective of youths with visual impairment in this region. This study is designed to achieve four main objectives. Those objectives are: (i) To identify the development of disability research discourse in Asian and the Pacific countries; (ii) To explore the attitudes of different stakeholders toward disability research implementation; (iii) To analyze the level of accessibility to local disability research findings; and, (iv) To suggest systemic actions for regional coordination of disability research production.

The present article focuses on all four objectives mentioned above, while specific findings on the attitude of our research participants toward disability research are discussed elsewhere (Nasir, Efendi, Lau & Wong 2020). We begin with a brief discussion on past literature. Following that, we describe the methodological framework used in this study. Then, we deliberate the findings according to five dimensions; disability research discourse development, acknowledgment of the importance of disability research, prioritization of disability research, access to disability research findings, and roles of disabled people in disability research production. Finally, we suggest a few recommendations be considered by regional entities and governments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) spearheads many of the regional data collection on disability-related issues in the region. ESCAP conducts a series of regional data collection starting in 2006 which acts as a reference for policymakers, statisticians, and representatives of organizations for/of disabled persons (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2012a, p. iii). Some of the research topics include barrier-free tourism (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2003a), employment opportunity for disabled persons in Asia-Pacific countries (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2016), and accessibility (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2019).

In the recent mid-term evaluation of the Incheon Strategy, the Asia-Pacific region still faces lack of reliable and comparable data on disability due to differences in concepts of disability and data collection methods (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2018, p. 48) echoing the same frustration six years ago (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2012a). Thus, strong emphasis is made to each country in the region to collect data on disability using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF). The mid-term evaluation report also suggests that governments in the region use the indicators under the Incheon Strategy as a framework for the national data collection on disability issues (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific 2018, p. 58).

The question thus remains: why ESCAP keeps hammering the same message for more than a decade now? Are governments in this region not capable or some factors hampering these nations from fulfilling this goal? What are the roles and responsibilities of local disabled people's organizations and academics in this particularly vexed question? Reflecting on the first question raised above, the discussion must critically examine the moral, political, and cultural orientation among policymakers and policymaking bodies as an institution towards evidence-based activities regarding disability issues. Although there are socioeconomic advantages and political commitments, elements such as the recognition of importance and prioritization of disability-related data collection (Nasir & Hussain 2019, p. 123) are equally of note.

This, in turn, affects governments' actions in policies such as funding allocation and facilitating the necessary human capital development. Government, as a part of its nature, is political, which regulate other institutions and a major cultivator of episteme in society (Nasir & Efendi 2019, p. 86) can heavily influence the knowledge production sector. However, policymakers and policymaking bodies are only a part of the stakeholders. Moving to the second question concerning local disabled people's organizations and academics, these parties too have a significant role in pushing for the comprehensive data collection on disability issues.

The early history of disabled people's movements and the development of disability studies in the United Kingdom and the United States evince the consolidated actions and presence of disabled activists and scholars in questioning the construction of disability. Early organizations such as the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation in the United Kingdom publically challenge and make organizations representing disabled people during their time accountable. Between the 1980s until 1990s, a surge of scholarly work on disability can be witnessed through the work of important figures such as Paul Hunt, Vic Finkelstein, Mike Oliver, Colin Barnes, Len Barton, Jenny Morris, and so forth. In his book, Shakespeare (2018) describes three waves of disability studies progression; the era of the social model of disability, the post-social model era, and the critical disability studies era.

This triggers a couple of additional questions: do these waves of disability studies progression influence disability studies in the global South, especially in Asian and the Pacific countries? Are scholars and activists in this region simply play the role of 'followers' and 'importers', or engage in this field as 'co-producers' and 'leaders'? Using the post-colonial black feminist disability theory and praxis as a framework, Cutajar and Adjoe (2016) criticize the 'importation' of Western ideas on disability which are not compatible with historical and socioeconomic contexts in other countries in the global South. They also warn of the possible neo-liberalization of disabled people's governance and the preoccupation with international disability prevalence statistics can minimize the value of the lived experience of disabled citizens.

In the context of research involving disabled indigenous people in Australia, Gilroy and Donelly (2016) advocate for the utilization of the indigenous standpoint theory. The indigenous standpoint theory offers a sophisticated but inclusive framework for disability research which gives prominence to the intersections of personal, spiritual, familial, geographical, cultural, and material factors as well as the direct ecological relationships between human beings to their land. From a different perspective, Chouinard and colleagues (2016) present the advantages of the emotional geography of research encounters to inform the research process and practices. The mapping of the emotional geography of research encounters promotes ethical, sensitive, and accessible methodologies that can increase research participation and the gain among the researched community from the research projects.

Another way to promote positive disability research discourse is through regional collaboration. Rioux and colleagues (2016) promote a transformative model of North-South research agenda which centers on the active participation and roles of disabled people as activists who directly engage with issues and people in their countries. Yet, as the collaboration involves two or more parties with different epistemological and methodological traditions, both national and international expectations by all team members must be managed effectively (Fisher, Shang & Xie 2016). From the past literature and experiences of the international disabled community, there are ways to facilitate and accelerate the fulfillment of the 8th goal of the Incheon Strategy before the end of its term.

METHODOLOGY

We use an exploratory quantitative research design for this study to obtain a general and wider overview of the research topic. However, we realize employing such a design can only uncover superficial information with respect to the disability research discourse in Asian and the Pacific region. We are very much aware that such topic needs a depth, complex, and practical methodologies. We also need to express here that this is just an exploratory study. As such, the findings from this research should not be generalized as the full picture of the whole region. Nevertheless, this study should not be discarded as it serves as a starting point for a more critical investigation on this topic in this region.

Our research participants comprise of youths with visual impairment living in Asian and the Pacific countries. There are 49 research participants take part in this survey. They come from 17 countries in Asian and the Pacific region which are Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Fiji, Indonesia, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Laos, Brunei, Samoa, and Tonga. However, the number of research participants from each country is not equal. The following Table 1 shows the number of research participants from each country.

Table 1: Number of research participants from each country

Country	Number of respondents
Bangladesh	2
Bhutan	11
Brunei	1
Fiji	1
Indonesia	3
Kyrgyzstan	1
Laos	1
Malaysia	4
Mongolia	1
Myanmar	3
Nepal	1
Philippines	11
Samoa	2
Sri Lanka	2
Tajikistan	1
Tonga	1
Vietnam	3
Total	49

The unequal number of research participants as illustrated in Table 1 above may be caused by a few factors. First, many visually impaired youths in many Asian and the Pacific countries may face a language barrier to meaningfully respond to the survey. Second, many of the visually impaired youths in many Asian and the Pacific countries may not own appropriate devices to access the survey, especially those who have low income or no income at all. Third, insufficient internet coverage, particularly in rural areas in these countries may also affect their research participation.

As shown in Table 1 above, the highest number of respondents are from Bhutan and the Philippines. Several countries only have one respondent and those countries are Brunei, Fiji, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, Tajikistan, and Tonga. Of these, 18 of them (36.7%) are female and 31 of them (63.3%) are male. 19 of the research participants (38.8%) self-reported as having low vision and the remaining 30 (61.2%) are self-identified as blind.

Their age range is between 18-40 years old. 22 research participants (44.9%) report that they never take part as a research participant in any disability-related research and 27 of them (55.1%) have. Only 24.5% (12 research participants) of them have the experience of conducting disability-related research, whereas 75.5% of them (37 research participants) have not. At the time this survey was carried out, 10 research participants do not join any disabled people's organization as a member, while 26 of them hold a position in disabled people's organizations.

We employ cluster sampling through the database of ex-trainees of Teruko Ikeda ICT Training which is an annual ICT course organized by the Japan Braille Library for visually impaired youths in the Asia-Pacific region. To date, there are more than 100 ex-trainees of Teruko Ikeda ICT Training. In addition, we also encourage the ex-trainees to share the survey with their peers in their own country. In other words, we also utilize the snowball technique through our respondents. This is to increase the number of research participants in each country.

We disseminate an online questionnaire to the targeted sample group through email. We develop the questionnaire using the Google Form application. There are two parts of the questionnaire. Part A collects the demographic background of our research participants, whereas Part B collects respondents' views on disability research production in their country. We base the formulation of questions in Part B on the findings found in the first author's and his colleagues' previous work (Nasir, Efendi & Hussain 2019; Nasir & Hussain 2019). The language used in the questionnaire is English since we want to gather data from international respondents. The data collection process starts in early January of 2018 and ends in the first week of February of 2018.

To interpret the data, we calculate the average score of the total number of research participants from each country. There are six values assigned to a specific range of average score; very negative (the average point of 1.99 and below), moderately negative (the average point between 2 to 2.99), least negative (the average point between 3 to 3.99), least positive (the average point between 4 to 4.99), moderately positive (the average point between 5 to 5.99), and very positive (the average point between 6 to 7). We do the calculation using Microsoft Excel software. Once again, we must strongly emphasize here that the findings in this paper cannot be generalized.

DISCUSSION

The first objective of this study is to identify the development of disability research discourse in Asian and Pacific countries. At the beginning of Part B of the survey, we ask our research participants on their view with regards to the progress of disability research discourse in their country. From Table 2 below, the data suggests that the majority of the countries score a positive average point which varies from the least to the highest. Nine countries score the least positive average point which are Brunei, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Samoa, Sri Lanka, and Tonga. Laos, on the other hand, is the only country scores the highest positive average point. On the negative spectrum, three countries score the least negative average point which are Fiji, Indonesia, and Vietnam. From this data, it seems that the progression of disability research discourse between countries in the Asia-Pacific region is quite dispersed.

Table 2: Development of disability research discourse in individual country

Country	Average point
Bangladesh	5 (moderately positive)
Bhutan	5.3 (moderately positive)
Brunei	4 (least positive)
Fiji	3 (least negative)
Indonesia	3.3 (least negative)
Kyrgyzstan	5 (moderately positive)
Laos	7 (very positive)
Malaysia	4.3 (least positive)
Mongolia	4 (least positive)
Myanmar	4.6 (least positive)
Nepal	4 (least positive)
Philippines	4.7 (least positive)
Samoa	4 (least positive)
Sri Lanka	4.5 (least positive)
Tajikistan	5 (moderately positive)
Tonga	4 (least positive)
Vietnam	3.6 (least negative)

As to increase of interest to do disability research, countries such as Fiji, Kyrgyzstan, and Nepal score the least negative average point. Laos, once again, scores the highest positive average point which is 7, and Brunei scores the second-highest positive average point. In contrast to the data presented in Table 2 above, it seems there is an increase of interests in Indonesia and Vietnam, even though its progression is rated as the least negative. This may suggest that in Indonesia and Vietnam, there is an increase in interests among local researchers to conduct studies related to disability issues. But, such an increase may not lead to a positive development from the viewpoint of our research participants in these two countries.

This may be related to issues such as the lack of materialization of research impact on disabled people's lives, unethical conduct, or lack of information on the progress of disability research production. Previous studies have highlighted persisting and growing concerns among disabled people towards research which are done on the promise of betterment or done on their behalf (Duckett & Pratt 2001; Kitchin 2000; Nasir, Efendi & Hussain 2019; Nasir & Hussain 2019), showing an increasing disengagement among the disabled community to the research activities and the academy. If this negative pattern recurred, it potentially brings further isolation of disabled people in an oppressive knowledge production culture and system.

To disrupt this conundrum, we see two potential points of intervention. First, local disabled people's organizations must reinvent their organizational core philosophy from self-help to social change. Making the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) as an example, local disabled people's organizations in Asian and the Pacific countries must drastically shift their focus and activities to intellectually and politically challenge the local notion of disablement. The other path is for a group of like-minded scholars, university students, and activists (with and without impairment and/or chronic illness) to establish a new public intellectual organization (taking the example of Society for Disability Studies and Canadian Disability Studies Association) and use all available venues to them to reform the knowledge production processes on disability issues.

Response from Kyrgyzstan illustrates the opposite finding compare to Indonesia and Vietnam. Kyrgyzstan scores the least negative average point in respect to increasing of interest, but scores positively on the development of disability research discourse. One hypothesis is that our research participant from Kyrgyzstan gives a positive score in Table 2 may be the research participant sees a positive awareness about disability research in the country, but such awareness does not attract interest among Kyrgyz researchers and students.

Table 3: Increase of interest in disability research

Country	Average point
Bangladesh	5 (moderately positive)
Bhutan	5.1 (moderately positive)
Brunei	6 (very positive)
Fiji	3 (least negative)
Indonesia	4 (least positive)
Kyrgyzstan	3 (least negative)
Laos	7 (very positive)
Malaysia	4 (least positive)
Mongolia	5 (moderately positive)
Myanmar	5.3 (moderately positive)
Nepal	3 (least negative)
Philippines	4.8 (least positive)
Samoa	5.5 (moderately positive)
Sri Lanka	5 (moderately positive)
Tajikistan	5 (moderately positive)
Tonga	4 (least positive)
Vietnam	4 (least positive)

Next, we seek to explore the perception of visually impaired youths on the attitudes of different stakeholders toward disability research implementation. For this objective, we adopt two main items for analytical purposes; acknowledgment of importance and prioritization. Here, the multiple stakeholders refer to the government, disabled people's organizations, and the general disabled community.

Table 4: Acknowledgement of importance and prioritization of disability research by the government

Country	Average point	
	Acknowledgment of importance	Prioritization
Bangladesh	2 (moderately negative)	2.5 (moderately negative)
Bhutan	4.3 (least positive)	4.4 (least positive)
Brunei	2 (moderately negative)	3 (least negative)
Fiji	5 (moderately positive)	5 (moderately positive)
Indonesia	2.3 (moderately negative)	1 (very negative)
Kyrgyzstan	4 (least positive)	3 (least negative)
Laos	2 (moderately negative)	1 (very negative)
Malaysia	4.5 (least positive)	3.5 (least negative)
Mongolia	1 (very negative)	1 (very negative)
Myanmar	4 (least positive)	2 (moderately negative)
Nepal	2 (moderately negative)	2 (moderately negative)
Philippines	4.5 (least positive)	2 (moderately negative)
Samoa	5.5 (moderately positive)	4.5 (least positive)
Sri Lanka	2 (moderately negative)	3.5 (least negative)
Tajikistan	7 (very positive)	7 (very positive)

Tonga	1 (very negative)	1 (very negative)
Vietnam	3.7 (least negative)	2.3 (moderately negative)

Only respondents from Bhutan, Fiji, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Samoa, and Tajikistan report that their government acknowledges the importance of disability research. However, with regards to the prioritization of disability research implementation, only respondents from Bhutan, Fiji, Samoa, and Tajikistan score a positive average point. The data in Table 4 above instantiates that acknowledgment of importance does not necessarily lead to the prioritization. This may be one of the reasons that the Asia-Pacific region struggles to acquire reliable and comparable data on disabled people.

These findings present unfortunate findings both at the epistemological and empirical level. From an epistemological standpoint, local wisdom which in this context refers to the knowledge, experiences, and voices of disabled people is not properly utilized for the betterment of this minority group. From an empirical standpoint, governments need to conduct intervention research and policy analysis to identify effective policies and programs.

Table 5: Acknowledgement of importance and prioritization of disability research by disabled people's organizations

Country	Average point	
	Acknowledgment of importance	Prioritization
Bangladesh	4 (least positive)	4 (least positive)
Bhutan	5.5 (moderately positive)	5.9 (moderately positive)
Brunei	5 (moderately positive)	5 (moderately positive)
Fiji	7 (very positive)	7 (very positive)
Indonesia	4.3 (least positive)	6.7 (very positive)
Kyrgyzstan	7 (very positive)	5 (moderately positive)
Laos	4 (least positive)	5 (moderately positive)
Malaysia	5.8 (moderately positive)	4.8 (least positive)
Mongolia	1 (very negative)	1 (very negative)
Myanmar	4.3 (least positive)	5.7 (moderately positive)
Nepal	5 (moderately positive)	4 (least positive)
Philippines	5.7 (moderately positive)	4.2 (least positive)
Samoa	7 (very positive)	7 (very positive)
Sri Lanka	4 (least positive)	4.5 (least positive)
Tajikistan	7 (very positive)	7 (very positive)
Tonga	1 (very negative)	1 (very negative)
Vietnam	4 (least positive)	3 (least negative)

When asking about disabled people's organizations' acknowledgment of the importance and prioritization of disability research implementation, we observe four different patterns of response. First, positive consistency (such as Samoa and Tajikistan) refers to a consistent positive score for both items. Second, negative consistency (such as Mongolia and Tonga) refers to a consistent negative score for both items. Third, we can see the increasing difference as shown by Myanmar which scores the least positive average point for item "acknowledgment of importance", but scores higher for item "prioritization". Finally, we can see the decreasing difference as shown by Vietnam which scores the least positive average point for item "acknowledgment of importance", but score lesser for item "prioritization".

These show that disabled people's organizations in different countries in Asian and the Pacific region have a different orientation toward disability research implementation. In the case of countries that score 'negative consistency' and 'decreasing difference' results, such a situation may be precipitated by a few circumstances. First, local disabled people's organizations in those countries may have to give more attention to self-help services, causing these organizations to stuck in the charity-based mindset and industry. Second, this situation may also occur due to disablist-oppressive research conduct amongst local researchers and research institutions. From another viewpoint, local disabled people's organizations may not able to initiate and conduct research because of insufficient resources.

Data presented in Table 6 show similar patterns of response as shown in Table 5. However, there is a couple of significant differences between the two tables. First, the decreasing difference pattern as shown by Brunei, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, and Nepal is staggering between the two items. Second, we observe a consciousness gap between the disabled people's organizations and the general disabled community in some countries such as Bangladesh and Bhutan with regards to the acknowledgment of importance and prioritization of disability research implementation.

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Table 6: Acknowledgement of importance and prioritization of disability research by the general disabled community

Country	Average point	
	Acknowledgment of importance	Prioritization
Bangladesh	2 (moderately negative)	2 (moderately negative)
Bhutan	4 (least positive)	4.5 (least positive)
Brunei	7 (very positive)	2 (moderately negative)
Fiji	7 (very positive)	7 (very positive)
Indonesia	3 (least negative)	2.3 (moderately negative)
Kyrgyzstan	4 (least positive)	1 (very negative)
Laos	2 (moderately negative)	1 (very negative)
Malaysia	4 (least positive)	4.8 (least positive)
Mongolia	1 (very negative)	1 (very negative)
Myanmar	5 (moderately positive)	3 (least negative)
Nepal	5 (moderately positive)	2 (moderately negative)
Philippines	4.2 (least positive)	3.2 (least negative)
Samoa	4.5 (least positive)	4 (least positive)
Sri Lanka	2 (moderately negative)	3.5 (least negative)
Tajikistan	7 (very positive)	7 (very positive)
Tonga	1 (very negative)	1 (very negative)
Vietnam	4.3 (least positive)	4.3 (least positive)

Besides the reasons we hypothesized above, this may also suggest that the general disabled community in these countries are either; (a) not epistemic-oriented, or (b) have a lack or no access and equity to local knowledge production processes. Disabled people in many developing and poor countries in this region may not have the luxury to be involved or participate in research activities due to multiple forms of inequalities they have to face daily. Being involved or able to give feedback in research is easy for those who have a 'privileged' educational, social, and economic status. In other words, most disabled people are systematically and structurally oppressed and marginalized to take part in evidence-based activities. The discussion and investigation about research participation and research impact for disabled persons hence must take into account the structural, geographical, and cultural barriers that exist in society.

Data from the three tables above also signal a very worrying setback for positive disability research discourse in Asian and the Pacific region. These findings engender further investigation of the following issues:

1. The existence, recognition, and promotion of local wisdom towards disablement among the disabled community in their societies.
2. The social, psychological, emotional, material, and political positions of local disabled people and their relationships to disability-related knowledge production.
3. The power of disabled individuals and their community as a movement and as an institution to challenge existing knowledge as well as to produce new knowledge regarding their life struggles.
4. The interrogation of the disability research as a discipline, activities, and an institution through the analysis of biopolitical apparatus by using the work of Tremain (2005, 2017) as a part of the critical realist inquiry of the topic.
5. The borrowing and localization of foreign ideas on disability conceptualization and governance.

We are also curious whether our research participants have access to local disability research articles or reports. As shown in Table 7, all countries report difficulty in accessing local disability research findings. This situation may be caused by many research findings that are not published or may be published in a subscription-based online database (Nasir, Efendi & Hussain 2019). The third hypothesis is related to the findings in Table 8 below.

Table 7: Access to research findings

Country	Average point
Bangladesh	3.5 (least negative)
Bhutan	2.2 (moderately negative)
Brunei	3 (least negative)
Fiji	1 (very negative)
Indonesia	1 (very negative)
Kyrgyzstan	1 (very negative)
Laos	1 (very negative)
Malaysia	2 (moderately negative)
Mongolia	3 (least negative)
Myanmar	1 (very negative)
Nepal	1 (very negative)
Philippines	3.4 (least negative)
Samoa	3 (least negative)
Sri Lanka	1 (very negative)

Tajikistan	3 (least negative)
Tonga	1 (very negative)
Vietnam	3.7 (least negative)

Another aspect of research communication is whether the researchers share their research findings with the disabled community. In this matter, Kyrgyzstan, Philippines, and Samoa report a minimum level of research findings sharing practices among their local researchers. From this data, we observe that it is uncommon for researchers who conduct disability research projects in many of these countries to share their findings with the local disabled community. This will discourage emancipatory aspiration desired by the disabled people community, at least in terms of knowledge and information. This echoes the same concern voiced out in past studies (Duckett and Pratt 2001; Kitchin 2000; Nasir, Efendi & Hussain 2019; Nasir & Hussain 2019).

Table 8: Research findings sharing practices amongst local researchers

Country	Average point
Bangladesh	1 (very negative)
Bhutan	3.5 (least negative)
Brunei	1 (very negative)
Fiji	1 (very negative)
Indonesia	3 (least negative)
Kyrgyzstan	4 (least positive)
Laos	1 (very negative)
Malaysia	3.5 (least negative)
Mongolia	1 (very negative)
Myanmar	1 (very negative)
Nepal	1 (very negative)
Philippines	4.7 (least positive)
Samoa	4.5 (least positive)
Sri Lanka	1 (very negative)
Tajikistan	3 (least negative)
Tonga	1 (very negative)
Vietnam	3.3 (least negative)

As emphasized by previous scholars (Duckett & Pratt 2001; Stone & Priestley 1996), disabled people should also have shared control over the research process alongside researchers. In this study, we want to see whether our research participants feel that disabled people should be the primary initiator of disability research projects. All countries score a positive average point in this matter. This may signal a very proactive notion, at least amongst our research participants in this study, in spearheading disability-related research projects in their countries.

Table 9: Local disabled people as the primary initiator of disability research

Country	Average point
Bangladesh	6 (very positive)
Bhutan	6 (very positive)
Brunei	7 (very positive)
Fiji	7 (very positive)
Indonesia	5.3 (moderately positive)
Kyrgyzstan	7 (very positive)
Laos	5 (moderately positive)
Malaysia	7 (very positive)
Mongolia	6 (very positive)
Myanmar	6.7 (very positive)
Nepal	4 (least positive)
Philippines	5.9 (moderately positive)
Samoa	7 (very positive)
Sri Lanka	4 (least positive)
Tajikistan	7 (very positive)
Tonga	7 (very positive)
Vietnam	4.7 (least positive)

CONCLUSION

From the survey, we find that disability research discourse in Asian and the Pacific countries move at a different pace. This may result in a huge lag and a significant gap between these countries. Furthermore, our research participants perceive that different stakeholders in their countries view differently on the importance and prioritization of disability research implementation. This is another gap that needs to be intervened. We believe that disabled academicians and disabled university students in each country can play their role in reducing these gaps together with the support of local disabled people's organizations.

Research participants from all countries also claim to face difficulty to access local disability research findings. This situation becomes worse when local researchers do not share their findings with the local disabled community in many Asian and Pacific countries. Despite this, there is a spark of hope when all research participants view local disabled people should play a primary role in initiating disability research projects. Before concluding this article, we put forward several recommendations for regional entities as well as the governments in this region to consider:

- ESCAP and governments provide research funding to disabled people's organizations in Asian and the Pacific countries to conduct disability research which upholds co-production and cross stakeholder collaboration practices. Regional disabled people's organizations can also take this opportunity to work together with different national disabled people's organizations and universities to undertake disability research projects.
- ESCAP, governments, and other regional disabled people's organizations should establish an online library that specifically collects all documents with regards to disability issues, both academic and non-academic.
- Regional entities and governments must initiate fellowship programs to facilitate the development of expertise in disability studies among the citizens of the Asia-Pacific region through scholarship provision for postgraduate studies.
- A regional center dedicated to disability research and policy must also be established to assist related entities in formulating, monitoring, and evaluating policies and action plans.

As abundantly mentioned before, the result of this article cannot be generalized. We are fully aware of the need for depth, complex and critical methodologies for this topic. We manage to scratch just the surface of the real and complicated matter through the online survey we disseminated to our young research participants. The next step is to get a response from different parties such as government officers, leaders of disabled people's organizations, disabled academicians, and other stakeholders. Future studies should also extract qualitative data from research participants besides mapping the socio-cultural and socio-political settings of each country.

Although this study has limited sample and only gain superficial information about the situation of disability research discourse in the Asia-Pacific region through the lens of visually impaired youths, it adds up the scholarly literature on this topic in our effort to at least understand the fraction of real situation in this region. We hope this paper sparks interest among other academicians and activists to conduct disability research projects to emancipate disabled people from their life struggles. We also hope that regional bodies, such as ESCAP will take up all of our recommendations listed above.

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