

# Creative Leadership in Entrepreneurial People With Special Abilities

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**Abstract** – During the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia experienced a significant decline in domestic economic growth, with a 2.97% drop in the first quarter and 5.32% in the second quarter. The pandemic has also resulted in a sharp decline in the community economy, especially for people with special abilities (PwSAs), namely those with apparent physical limitations and intellectual disabilities. To alleviate the economic pressure faced by PwSAs, it is crucial to foster their entrepreneurial spirit and skills through creative leadership. This paper portrays the visionary leadership of a village head in Indonesia in empowering and improving PwSAs' economy through entrepreneurial activities. The research data was collected by observing the daily lives of PwSAs, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGD) with PwSAs and village officials. The study results show that the village head used different approaches for developing the entrepreneurship spirit and skills of PwSAs through training, skills guidance, and craft innovation before and during the pandemic. The programs implemented have increased the PwSAs' economic level, reducing the number of poor people.

This village head is clear evidence of the application of creative leadership in entrepreneurship with all his patience and empathy during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was finally able to solve complex problems faced by the PwSAs.

**Keywords** – Creative leadership, economy, entrepreneurship, people with special abilities.

## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has threatened most people's lives, such as health, psychological and social aspects [1]. The economy of approximately 165 countries, including developed countries, has been affected and hit by the recession [2]. Indonesia's domestic economy grew by 2.97% in the first quarter, shrank by approximately 5.32% in the second quarter of 2020 [3], and experienced minus 2.9% to 1.0% in September 2020. In addition, MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) businesses were predisposed to bankruptcy [4].

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the community's activities, particularly employees who had to stop working and stay home. The Semeru Institute emphasized three impacts of COVID-19 on the economy; the rising unemployment rate, poverty levels, and significant changes in the labor market structure [5]. The pandemic creates wider disparities between poor and prosperous societies in the long term. The gaps create social injustice and harm social welfare as they are the basic foundations of state stability [6].

About 10% of the Indonesian population, or around 24 million are people with special abilities, of which about 3.3% are 5-17 years old, and 22.0% are 18-59 years old. They are more likely to face the severe impact of the pandemic due to lesser engagement in social and economic opportunities and limited access to other public services [7]. Karangpatihan Village, Balong, Ponorogo, Indonesia, has a population different from other villages consisting of approximately 1-2% of people with mental and physical disabilities, most of whom originate from low-income families [8], [9].

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This phenomenon has gained attention from the government and society. Several national and international newspapers report the heroic nature of the village chief in providing creative and innovative empowerment programs for people with special abilities (PwSAs) and their families in this village to have a regular income, including producing handicrafts and fish cultivation. PwSAs' empowerment general goal is to enjoy the attraction and increase access in enhancing creativity and a more optimal economy [10].

Several studies have addressed the empowerment of PwSAs in Indonesia during the pandemic. Chawa et al. [11] used a community-based approach to improve the opportunity for the PwSAs in the tourist industry. Sudirman et al. [12] used the R & D method to enhance the responsiveness of women with disability to healthcare protocols. Sudiatmaka et al. [13] addressed the issue of how local government enhances the PwSAs, including providing monthly support funds of some amount and jobs after training. Several studies have also explicitly dealt with the empowerment of people living with disabilities in this village, including implementing vegetable cultivation in the polybag to improve income and family food security, the economic development, effectiveness, challenges, and solutions [9] as a model of economic strengthening.

However, previous studies explored the village's general picture and the typical development process of the PwSAs, which is primarily less analytical, and none has attempted to compare the entrepreneuring activities and their impacts on the PwSAs' economy before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to lack of an informed success story. Furthermore, the existing studies neglect the importance of the creative leadership of the village chief in sustaining their economy.

This paper portrays the creative leadership of the village chief in empowering and enhancing the PwSAs in the village by providing them with proper jobs and opportunities amidst the pandemic. Specifically, this paper presents the nature of the town, followed by discussions of the entrepreneuring process and the impacts of their economic conditions. The discussion considers the pandemic effects and the village chief's creative leadership. This study addresses the research gap regarding leadership creativity in entrepreneuring (PwSAs). Moreover, it enhances the comprehension of how creative leadership is applicable in various contexts, including the economic development of PwSAs. By doing so, this research seeks to contribute valuable insights into the role of visionary leadership in fostering entrepreneurship and economic growth within the PwSAs community.

## 2. Literature Review

Asian Blind Conference [14] defined disability as humans with limitations on physical or mental aspects; however, this limitation does not mean a deficiency but means ability with specialties. Approximately 15% of the world's population are persons with disabilities [15], [16]. Legally, those with physical, mental, or intellectual and sensory limitations, called persons with disabilities, have been regulated separately in Law Number 19 of 2011 concerning the Ratification of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [17]. The U.N. has provided hundreds of links to handling people with disabilities, including students, women, children, and adults, that should be conducted by individuals, organizations, communities, and governments [18].

People with physical and mental disabilities tend to be "exclusive" in community life, isolating themselves from social interaction. The community exclusion act could lead disabled people to have minimal access to information and communication, affecting their social and economic conditions. Social networking, including access to a proper job, is even more challenging for them, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic [7], [19].

Dysfunction of particular body parts will cause slow motor articulation and difficulty controlling oneself in doing something easy enough for ordinary people, which is not the case for those with physical disabilities. Likewise, mental intelligence below the average for normal humans will directly impact the speed and accuracy of understanding when communicating with others [20]. Physical and/or mental limitations make the PwSAs less responsive to changing situations and thus affect their role in daily economic livelihoods. In addition, such constraints could lead to lower self-confidence reducing the PwSAs' intensities in daily life activities [21]. Their motivation to move forward is eliminated by the limitations that stick with them. In this case, for them, entrepreneurship development is only a dream [22].

The feeling of limited abilities possessed by the PwSAs can be somewhat alleviated by the existence of a disabled community, with lots of interrelation and interaction among them, which they prefer [23], raising their motivation and enthusiasm so as not to easily give up on fulfilling life's needs, achieving what is expected, both as a person, as a head of households as well as citizens in general [20]. However, it is noted that community members who do not have savings and skills would experience challenging times amid the COVID-19 pandemic [22].

The role of leaders is essential in establishing a culture that encourages and sustains creative thinking. Visionary leadership plays a significant role in unleashing the potential of individuals to generate innovative ideas [24]. Creative leadership is “the process of influencing others to think and act in ways that create innovation, change, and growth” [25, p. 125]. They argue that creative leadership is distinct from traditional leadership styles emphasizing control, stability, and efficiency. Instead, creative leadership fosters a climate of openness, experimentation, and risk-taking, enabling individuals and teams to generate novel ideas and solutions to problems.

Similarly, creative leadership is the ability to inspire and facilitate innovation, original thinking, and problem-solving within individuals and organizations [26, p. 2].” It is how leaders can promote creativity in their teams and organizations by fostering a supportive environment, encouraging risk-taking, and providing resources for invention. It is a consistent combination of the philosophy, skills, traits, and attitudes underlying one's behavior and can be shown directly or indirectly in the leader's trust in his subordinates [27].

Entrepreneurship is not an unprecedented ability but develops from a long process of experience, struggle, and learning about life's journey with all its dynamics. Thus, to become an entrepreneur, one should continuously develop entrepreneurship abilities and skills [28], [29]. Creative leadership is crucial to entrepreneurial success, as it helps others think outside the box and create unique solutions to complex problems [30]. Creative leadership in entrepreneurship involves leveraging creativity and innovation to identify and pursue new business opportunities while motivating and inspiring others to contribute to the entrepreneurial process. Innovative leadership is the essence of the development activity in dealing with various conditions and situations, and each leader must also know the right time to select and implement a strategic approach to resolve a specific problem [31], [32].

Creative leadership can strategically develop the PwSAs to reduce their obstacles via entrepreneurship [33]. Developing the PwSAs' entrepreneurial spirit needs visionary leadership to avoid the termination of employment and cessation of economic ventures and empower them to become more independent, e.g., by training them in various skills suitable to them. Creative leadership in entrepreneurship affects the community's welfare, including the PwSAs, to fulfill their daily needs and economy [34].

Empirical studies support the positive relationship between creative leadership and entrepreneurial success, e.g., building business resilience among rural communities [35] and survival of tourism villages during the pandemic [36].

Creative leadership and entrepreneurship are closely related concepts essential for success in business and organizational contexts. They require skills, qualities, and a mindset that enable individuals to identify opportunities and pursue innovative solutions to problems. Individuals can build successful businesses, create jobs, and positively impact society with these traits. The creative and entrepreneurial leadership would be able to create imaginative scenarios necessary for selecting and mobilizing a supporting cast of interdependent members committed to and enacting the vision to achieve strategic values.

### 3. Methodology

This study employs an ethnographic approach to investigate the PwSAs experiencing difficulty during the pandemic and how local leaders entrepreneur them for economic improvement from their perspective [37], [38]. The study involves 20 subject participants from a rural community in the Karangpatihan village in Ponorogo. The participants were selected based on their positions in the town, known for its unique cultural practices and beliefs. Data was gathered through participant observation and semi-structured interviews conducted individually and in groups using focus group discussions. Additionally, document analysis was employed as part of the data collection process.

Participant observation [39] was conducted during the COVID-19 hit in Indonesia. The visited household consisted of two children who were enrolled in primary school. The family primarily worked as farmers, raising livestock such as chickens, birds, and lambs. Additionally, they engaged in occasional manual labor jobs. Despite their efforts, their income was insufficient to meet their daily meal requirements. We lived with the participants periodically for over a month. We observed their daily routines, recorded their behavior and interaction with each other, and discussed issues related to the past and current village's condition and the innovation conducted and achieved. By participating and establishing rapport with groups of informants, we received insights into their cultural knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, and suffering due to recent COVID-19 effects.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with each participant to gain deeper insights into issues encountered during participant observation. The critical informants chosen were based on their role in the empowerment process in the village.

They were three village officials (the village chief, head of the *Rumah Harapan* (the House of Hope), and director of the farmers' association, all men) and five PwAS members receiving entrepreneur activities, including three fathers and two mothers whose ages ranged from 40 to 50 years old. The village officials play an essential role in the smooth running of the village. They are fully responsible for what is in the town and are tasked with developing the village in a better direction. Meanwhile, the PwSAs have sufficient knowledge about the town as they live within during their lifetime.

We also conducted focus group discussions (FGD) to obtain in-depth information [40] from critical informants [41], including the village chief, the head of the *Rumah Harapan*, the director of the farmers' association, and seven PwSAs (five men and two women). The focus group discussions were conducted to investigate the significant change during the pandemic, the innovation undertaken by the village chief, and the leadership model displayed by the village chief in motivating and supporting the PwSAs and creating networking to market their products. In this process, the principal researcher, as moderator [42], leads the discussion by asking participants to respond to open-ended questions, while the second researcher records the course of the dialogue in detail [43]. Furthermore, during the discussion, the team in charge of minutes recorded all essential points, including the responses given by the speakers.

Document analysis involved collecting and analyzing documents related to the available records in the village, including the number of PwSAs, the disability levels, and the entrepreneuring process and economic level before the pandemic.

This study employed a thematic analysis of the data collected through participant observation and interviews [44]. We identified patterns and themes in the data and organized them into categories to better understand the participants' experiences and perspectives. Themes were discovered by aligning them with the research questions and were subsequently analyzed using a constant comparative method [45], then organized into a coherent narrative that reflected the conditions of the PwSAs and the leadership creativity in entrepreneuring the PwSAs.

The document analysis was also used to contextualize the data and provide a broader understanding of the social and cultural context of the community.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

The main results of the study are presented in this section and discussed in relation to the research questions. The potential implications of the results for both theory and practical applications are also taken into account.

##### 4.1. PwSAs in Karangpatihan Village

Previous studies indicate that the PwSAs account for 1-2% of the total population of Karangkepatihan Village, Balong, Ponorogo, Indonesia [8], [9]. From field observation and interviews, the current condition and level of communities with disabilities in the village can be populated into light, medium, and heavy categories (Figure 1). The light category of people with disabilities is those who can communicate and learn crafting skills slightly faster than people with moderate disabilities; they have craft-making skills and can learn to raise livestock. The medium category includes the hard of hearing and speech-impaired, but they can still find food for livestock, although it takes a relatively longer time than people with disabilities in the mild category. Ultimately, individuals in the heavy category experience paralysis and rely on others for their basic needs, such as eating, drinking, bathing, and personal hygiene. They are unable to perform these tasks independently and therefore depend on the support of their family, relatives, or caregivers for their daily living requirements. Interviews with the village officials and elders revealed that the unstable political situation, a coup d'état of *PKI* (Indonesian Communist Party), exacerbated the negative effect of famine, leading to the village community living in even worse conditions to the extent that those living in remote areas only consumed *tiwul* rice, a kind of food stipple made of dry cassava. According to the chief village, the PwSAs included those with mental and physical disabilities, making their daily needs dependent on others. This feature is in line with the findings of Gauthier-Boudreault et al. [46] in that the PwSAs' physical and mental limitations make them less responsive to changing situations and thus affect their role in daily economic livelihoods.

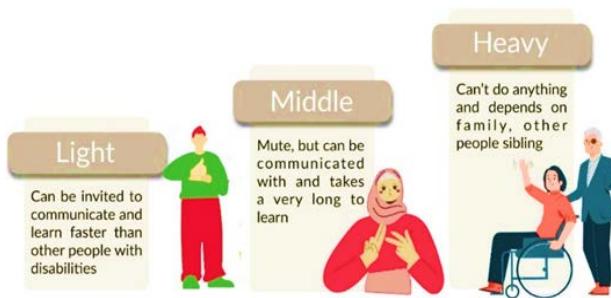


Figure 1. The level of disabilities in Karangpatihan village (Source: Field Observation)

The majority of the PwSAs are in the poor and very poor categories. Most of them work as agricultural laborers with minimum wages, so they cannot fulfill their basic daily needs. This group of imperfect people tends to suffer more in the dry season because they cannot work in the agricultural sector as the farmlands lack water, and they do not have other skills to work in other areas. Most people in the community seem awkward when interacting with PwSAs, and they even stigmatize the PwSAs as disabled people who cannot perform specific roles in the community [47]. As a result, they position PwSAs as not having an improper right in the community. In this situation, those with disabilities suffer from the negative attitudes and perceptions of others [48].

Based on the results of interviews, the existence of the disabled community group is felt to be able to help alleviate the sense of limitations in the abilities possessed by people with disabilities through the interactions that occur. Thus, the group facilitates stronger bonds among PwSAs [49]. In addition, social support from parents, friends, and caring others would reduce the burden of feeling disabled among the PwSAs [50].

#### 4.2. Entrepreneurship PwSAs Before and During the Pandemic

Table 1 summarizes various entrepreneurship training programs conducted before and during the pandemic, which the latter caters to even more variety. Since 2013, the PwSAs have received different training tailored to their abilities and specializations to be more capable and independent in fulfilling their daily economic needs and families. Such training included product manufacturing and other businesses. The village chief monitors and evaluates their activities to resolve obstacles to implementing the training materials. This action increases the motivation of the PwSAs and better social interaction with leaders; they feel that they are not a burden to the community, especially to the village chief.

Table 1. Training activities of PwSAs before and during the COVID-19 pandemic

Before Pandemic	During Pandemic
1. Cultivating catfish	1. Cultivation of catfish
2. Livestock	2. Goats raising
3. Making a silk ladle, a tourist motivational cooking tool	3. Prayer beads
4. Making key chains for various tourist motifs	4. Making doormats
5. Making ornate tourist photo frames	5. Making <i>ciprat batik</i> clothing with typical Karangpatihan and ethnic motifs.
6. Making travel trinkets such as rings, bracelets, hair ornaments, etc.	6. Making rice scoops and broth
7. Making stationery crafts and tourist motif wall hangings	7. Making general motif keychains
	8. Making t-shirt screen printing to order and common motifs
	9. Making screen printing of plastic bags according to orders and general motifs
	10. Making clothes hangers
8. Making <i>ciprat batik</i> cloth and shirts as a tourism motivation	11. Making household brooms and mats
	12. Making paper tissue boxes
	13. Ethnic motif photo frame making
	14. Making flower vases with ethnic motifs
	15. Making souvenirs of ethnic motifs with custom greetings.

Source: Training documents, 2020

Source: Interviews in 2021

Before the pandemic, four steps were taken to empower the PwSAs in the village. The first step was conducting a contingency program that enabled the PwSAs to provide daily needs for themselves and their families. This effort included training on doormats made of scraps from a T-shirt convection company. Due to the limited materials and one piece of equipment for making doormats, only two PwSAs were arranged for training. The chief bought this tool with his own money and collected the raw materials for the doormat from a t-shirt convection company in the district. In this sense, the chief has demonstrated the very nature of servant leadership by attempting to serve the PwSAs fully [51].

Training for making doormats is relatively easy for ordinary people, but it is not easy and takes a long time for people with limited vision (blind).

Such training must be done with patience, perseverance, full of empathy, a friendly manner, and encouragement, reflecting the characteristics of social entrepreneurship [52]. The PwSAs took approximately three years to complete the doormat-making training program, then produce the doormats in their homes. They could make at least 6 to 10 wimps per person daily. The village chief team sold doormats for IDR20,000 per piece, with a profit-sharing scheme [53] as follows, IDR8.000 for producers, the PwSAs, and IDR12,000 for raw materials and organization capital. Successfully trained in doormat making, the village chief team provided guidance and supervision, searched, and supplied raw materials, received the PwSAs products, paid for them daily, and sustainably marketed their handicraft. This initial step has empowered the PwSAs to fulfill their daily needs.

Building entrepreneurship centers can provide resources and support for aspiring entrepreneurs, promote innovation and economic growth, and contribute to developing an entrepreneurial ecosystem [54]. Thus, due to the more products the PwSAs produced and the more complex the entrepreneurship activities, the chief established a place called *Rumah Harapan* as an activity center. It is the center for empowering the community to be economically independent. It includes providing guidance, training, assistance, and empowerment for persons with disabilities, the poor, widows, older people, orphans, and youth to create a just and prosperous society. In this place, other skill development to foster entrepreneurship skills of the PwSAs was carried out, such as making flower vases, knick-knacks, prayer mats, and screen printing.

The second step was to meet the PwSAs' needs to improve their living standards [55], such as education for their children, adequate daily nutrition, health maintenance, and sufficient clothing. *Rumah Harapan* attempted to create a more productive business whose profit would be enough to fulfill a monthly need to achieve this purpose, using available local potentials [56], such as cock and hens. The chief gave each PwSAs two hens and one cock and taught them about raising livestock. They hoped to get chicken eggs daily for family consumption, further breeding, and sale. The laying eggs program successfully met the family needs and the village community. The chief made a village bill stating that the villagers were not allowed to buy chicken eggs or meat from another village, and the violation of this bill was subject to a social sanction, that is, a social boycott in that the neighbors would not attend the violators' social or religious gathering invitation. This regulation forced the village community to maximize their potency in breeding chicken and livestock [57].

Recently, producing chicken and livestock was conducted by the PwSAs and other residents. After several years of the program implementation, Karangpatihan village is known as Desa Sentral Telor (Village of Egg Center). This village supplied eggs or chicken for people in the regency and surroundings. *Rumah Harapan* coordinates the marketing and circulation of the eggs that are produced.

The third step was to create a business program that could generate income within three months for the PwSAs and other poor communities [58]. The business program initiated was cultivating catfish and carp. This business was expected to provide income to improve nutritional intake and household appliances. Because this program requires a hefty budget, it began with a pilot project backed by Village-Owned Enterprise (BUMDes). Initially, this program was quite successful and was finally discontinued due to various technical matters and limited natural resources. Learning from the failure of the catfish and carp programs, the chief initiated livestock-rearing programs [59], such as goat raising, which BUMDes supported financially. *Rumah Harapan* provided technical training and mentoring by sending several young cadres to participate in training on raising goats and cattle, after which they would oversee the goat-raising program in the village. In less than three years, all disabled people and most poor villagers followed this program. Therefore, the meat supply was always available for social or religious gatherings, celebrations, or parties in the village. People's need for meat in surrounding areas was also well supplied. This village was then known as the village of the goat center in the regency. Many ordinary people followed the PwSAs' steps in goat breeding due to significant economic earnings and the imposed purchasing policy.

The last step was establishing a formal organization by coordinating youth in *Rumah Harapan*. They participated in skills and managerial training held by various government agencies and organizations. The training includes traditional and modern crafts, livestock and fishing, hydroponic vegetable farming, cooking, baking, healthy fresh drinks, management and entrepreneurship, marketing, computer essentials, online marketing, and network creation. They are motivated and guided as cadres to promote the community's social economy. Therefore, when there are religious and socio-economic projects in the village, they will actively respond and act as project supporters at the forefront to supervise project implementation [60].

Unfortunately, all pre-pandemic programs decreased drastically, especially the craft program for making doormats and other knick-knacks, due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in early March 2020 onward.

Accordingly, village leaders and their apparatus carry out specific analyses and evaluations of the abilities and interests of the PwSAs and strategies to reduce problems faced. Based on the internal and external potentials, it was decided to provide training in other productive skills and entrepreneurship guidance for PwSAs in a short time and a suitable approach model [61].

The village chief and apparatus noted that this decision was made possible because, so far, the psychological and social interaction and the closeness between the PwSAs and village leaders and their officials have become more solid, which was not the case during the initial training in 2013. Some of the training provided during the pandemic was not new for the participants, but some of the essential products were different, challenging them. In addition, trainers and mentors from external bodies were brought in, including the Center for Work Training, the Industry and Trade Service, and the Regency Cooperative Office [62]. Furthermore, according to the village chief, several philanthropic agencies and organizations back up training materials and capital ventures. The entire entrepreneurship training and guidance process was completed in early May 2020, after which the production activity was in operation while maintaining technical and quality control up to the product packaging. These stages followed distribution, marketing, and market penetration by agencies and individuals with market networks.

Specifically, the village chief took four notable and innovative actions for the PwSAs in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The first step was to provide handicraft training to the PwSAs with different models and approaches. The handicrafts made were no longer iconic for tourist attractions as they were. Instead, general and ethnic handicrafts were made according to the target market segment. This effort was arduous, took a long time, and needed remarkable resilience, requiring different and new skills [63]. New several products were made, including flower vases, ethnic motif key chains, clothes hangers, ethnic motif t-shirts, general motifs of all sizes, t-shirts of screen printing by order, rice scoops, available plastic bags by order, brooms and mats, tissue paper boxes, frames of ethnic and known motifs, and knick-knacks by order. In only three months, the market absorption rose again, although slowly.

The second step was to provide financial assistance for medical care related to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Rumah Harapan* offers financial aid for families accompanying the patients at the hospital. The *BPJS* (Social Security Administrator) covers the medical cost of the patient, while *Rumah Harapan* covers the meal and living expenses of the accompanying patients at the hospital.

The third step was to provide financial support for education. Many schools are closed during the pandemic, and the teaching process is conducted from home (online learning). An issue arises: low-income people find it challenging to provide online learning infrastructures, such as computers and an internet connection. *Rumah Harapan* extends educational support for the PwSAs and other children of low-income families, including school kits and internet connection fees for schools performing online learning and uniforms for those still conducting face-to-face learning at schools.

The last step was conducting a cooking training program for the PwSAs and low-income people. Culinary products, such as bread, cakes, rice, fish, and vegetables produced from this training, are introduced to the village community to taste, and match the price and taste. The chief enacted the regulation that the villagers cannot use culinary products from another village; instead, they must order a meal from the village's culinary produces for social and religious gatherings, celebrations, or parties. Failure to adhere to this rule will result in social consequences or penalties. People from other towns eventually followed this model of the culinary program.

The existence of a figure village chief with a creative leadership pattern, intense assistance in training, and transforming knowledge and skills were expected to empower the PwSAs [29] and reduce their economic dependency [64]. The chief village conducts skills training and entrepreneurship education intensively and wholeheartedly. Before and during the pandemic, the village chief regularly provides specific practical skills training based on individual interests, abilities, and conditions. Practical knowledge about the management flow, production process, quality control, marketing, finance management, and business development is packed into comprehensive training for the PwSAs. Leadership creativity is shown in his adjustment of training and entrepreneuring to the conditions, e.g., in the pandemic and varying physical and mental abilities of the PwSAs [65], [66]. Leaders with a creative approach will be quickly understood and accepted in providing entrepreneurial guidance to the PwSAs.

#### 4.3. *Economic Conditions Before and During COVID-19 Pandemic*

The poverty level of the village community differs significantly before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 2 describes the economic levels of the PwSAs based on the three groups gathered from the focus group discussions.

The poor group experienced the sharpest downward trend, from 340 people in 2008 to 47 people in 2019, or 86.2%; the nearly poor group had the second-highest decline (81.4%), and the very poor group had a high decrease (43.6%) in the same period. The significant fall in the poverty line was due to the entrepreneurship training organized by the village chief with his creative and innovative ideas [67]. In addition, PwSAs products dominated the market in various tourist attractions.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the poverty level of the village community. Within four months before the training was conducted, the poverty line of all groups significantly increased; the poor group increased the most (129.8%) from January to May 2020; the nearly poor group was 86.2%, and the very poor category increased by 26.2%, for the same period. However, a notable change occurred after the entrepreneurship training and assistance programs. The poverty line of the poor group dropped by 45.4%, the nearly poor category by 39.7%, and the very poor cohort by 14.0%.

The focus group discussion revealed that the economic drop in the village community during the early five months of the pandemic in 2020 was due to a substantial decrease in production activities, numerous workers had to cease working, and the market showed low demand for the products, resulting in reduced absorption of goods. During the pandemic, the government limited social movement [68] and economic activities on a large scale in certain areas, affecting tourism, such as tourist spots and souvenir shops being closed because there were very few buyers and tourism needs were not a top priority [69]. Dcode Economic & Financial Consulting [70] reported that this global pandemic affected the tourism sector worst. The PwSAs community experienced a similar negative trend in economic decline due to the pandemic [71]. Many PwSAs who have worked as workers in shops and other businesses are laid off, affecting a reduction in their purchasing power [72].

However, in the last half-year of 2020, the economic conditions of the PwSAs improved significantly due to the creative leadership of the village chief, for example, introducing an innovative marketing strategy for their products, including online marketing. The market conditions have not recovered from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic [73]. Thus, product marketing should be conducted through e-digital business professionally. The village chief suggested that products initially directed to the tourism market continue to be produced due to market online demand [74]. To this point, the online marketing model has become an essential key to recognizing the products of the PwSAs locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally [75].

Online marketing is becoming popular for two reasons: health protocol in breaking the chain of COVID-19 spread [76] and increased demand for the products delivered online [77].

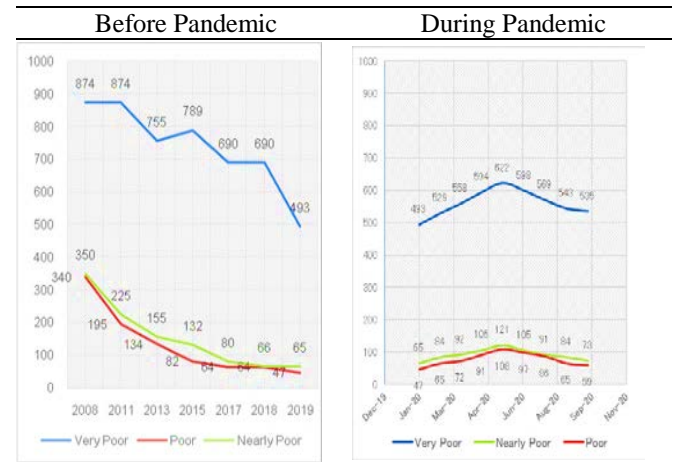


Figure 2. Poverty line of the village community before and during the pandemic

The application of online marketing resulted in products marketed by PwSAs dominating the market in various regions, especially tourism areas. Based on the data shown, there has been a significant change in the economic level of PwSA through the efforts of village heads to provide training, skills guidance, craft innovation, and entrepreneurial development for people with special abilities before and during the pandemic with different approaches amid the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 5. Conclusion

Human disability leads to poverty through several exclusionary processes in daily life. The participation of the PwSAs in social, political, and economic arenas is minor due to limitations in community interaction. The village chief in Karangpatihan Village relentlessly and patiently motivated, encouraged, and enhanced the life of the PwSAs. He is an Indigenous and local creative leader in accelerating people's economy amidst the pandemic, especially the PwSAs and the poor people. He has demonstrated the nature of innovative and entrepreneurial leadership for people with disabilities in the village—various entrepreneurship training, skill guidance, and craft innovation have been provided for the PwSAs and people experiencing poverty for many years, especially during the pandemic. The entrepreneuring programs conducted have successfully decreased the community's poverty level.

Entrepreneuring PwSAs in the village of Karangpatihan involved four steps.



Unfortunately, all pre-pandemic programs decreased drastically, especially the craft program for making doormats and other knick-knacks, due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in early March 2020 onward. Accordingly, village leaders and their apparatus conduct specific analyses and evaluations of the abilities and interests of the PwSAs and strategies to reduce problems faced. Based on the internal and external potentials, it was decided to provide training in other productive skills and entrepreneurship guidance for PwSAs in a short time and a more suitable approach model. The village chief creative leadership model has made it easy for the PwSAs to follow and acquire knowledge and skills of entrepreneurship development and then applied during tough times.

This study indicates that creative, inspiring, and empathetic leaders are the keys to overcoming community problems. Creative entrepreneurship leadership is essential to move the economic wheels of the PwSAs successfully and the people experiencing poverty in general. In addition, this study expands the understanding that economic development programs in rural areas should take advantage of the help of locally capable people to achieve better results, as they are the ones who regularly interact with the targeted groups daily.

This study is limited to the observation of entrepreneuring people with special abilities by creative leadership in the village of Karangpatihan. Other areas with a high prevalence of people with special abilities could have different programs or none for their economic empowerment. Thus, further research should be conducted with broader village coverage, especially in remote areas. Doing this would enrich the knowledge of how creative leaders develop entrepreneurship efforts to reduce the burden of people with special abilities.

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