Research Article

Facilitators' Engagement in Advocacy towards Inclusion of Adults with Disabilities in the Literacy Training Program in Gedeo Zone, Ethiopia

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The study aimed at investigating facilitators' engagement in advocacy towards inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program in the Gedeo Zone, Ethiopia. A mixed-methods approach with the explanatory sequential design was employed. The study involved a sample of 214 facilitators by using stratifying random sampling technique. A Likert-type scale questionnaire was administered to the facilitators with a response rate of 98.6% ($N=211$). In addition, a total of 13 respondents (3 principals, 3 supervisors, 3 adults with disabilities, and 4 experts) were selected purposively for interview based on their active participation in the program. The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 23, while the qualitative data were analyzed using narrative analysis. The results from both the quantitative and qualitative strands revealed that facilitators are engaged in advocacy services by providing awareness-raising training to speak up about them, by sensitizing the community, by working collaboratively with the colleagues and the local government to make the training environment accessible to all adults. Pearson's correlation coefficient for providing an awareness-raising training ($r(211)=0.683^{**}$, $p<0.01$), working collaboratively with colleagues ($r(211)=0.754^{**}$, $p<0.01$), working collaboratively with the local governments ($r(211)=0.766^{**}$, $p<0.01$), and participating in the community sensitization programs ($r(211)=0.821^{**}$, $p<0.01$) showed that the items are statistically significant and positively correlated.

1. Introduction

The right to and need of education for all people with disabilities throughout the world have led to the inclusive education movement, crystallized by the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action [1] and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [2]. As a result, in many countries, a growing number of facilitators are receiving training on how to train and advocate for adults with disabilities in inclusive settings and many others are also receiving specialized training to train a specific group of adults with disabilities. While there are ongoing debates on whether people with certain types of disabilities

learn best in specialized education and training settings, or are better served in general training settings, there is a strong consensus that all people with disabilities can learn and are entitled to good education [3].

In 2006, Ethiopia launched the Special Needs and Inclusive Education Strategy, in an attempt to facilitate the education of children, youth, and adults with disabilities into the Third Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP-III) and to reduce the adult literacy by 50%, which is one of the 2015 millennium development goals. The strategic document stresses the need for well-trained facilitators, to increase the return rate of disabled adults to education. However, the results obtained have been less than

satisfactory [4]. Hence, the government evaluated and revised the 2006 Special Needs Education Strategy by focusing on the right-based approach of education, which made a paradigm shift towards inclusive education in 2012. Accordingly, the strategic document assumes that inclusion is the right-based approach for the education of adults with disabilities, and facilitators engaging in advocacy are required to assure this right-based approach to education for adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs.

There are some dimensions of the training settings, such as higher levels of support from facilitators and colleagues that showed better relationships with facilitators or a stronger emphasis on developing intrinsic motivation for training and understanding the content than an academic achievement, which favors more positive attitudes towards people with disabilities [5]. The factors mentioned above, however, were not analyzed at the level of specific training settings, but only at the level of individual adults with disabilities, which is not under contemporary standards of analyzing the situation in the literacy training settings [6].

The Association for the Development of Education in Africa [7] recognizes that the adult literacy training programs in Ethiopia must take into consideration the specific training needs of adults with disabilities. This implies that the facilitators who are involved in adult literacy training programs should consider the specific needs of adults with disabilities in the programs. The Ethiopian government has conceded the recent laws that require the inclusion of adults with disabilities in decision-making policies and employment [8]. The government is also trying to put in place systems and policies to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. Despite the efforts made by the government to enact and adopt laws and policies, enforcing and putting them into practice is still a challenge.

Hence, what is needed is a strong and vibrant voice for persons with disabilities, not just advocacy groups. Ensuring a disability perspective in all aspects of a policy and labor legislation, effective implementation and enforcement of existing disability laws and policies, and providing equal employment and training opportunities are among the factors that contribute to the reduction in poverty and the social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities in Ethiopia [9].

In Ethiopia, the implementation of inclusive education is based on the assumption that facilitators are ready to train adults with disabilities in mainstream education and training settings and have willing to address the needs of such trainees with devotion and enthusiasm. However, previous studies conducted in different education settings in Ethiopia [8] showed the adverse effects of facilitators' attitudes and lack of engagement on adult literacy programs. Some of these studies include the inclusion of people with visual impairment in teaching English subject [10], challenges and opportunities to implement inclusive education [11], and psychosocial and educational challenges and opportunities of people with visual impairment [12]. Despite addressing various relevant issues, yet, these studies were far from addressing the facilitators' engagement in advocacy towards

the inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs.

On the other side, the Five-Year Education Sector Development Program (ESDP-V), which is planned to be implemented from 2015/16 to 2019/20 in Ethiopia, prioritizes equal opportunities and participation of education and training for all, with special attention given to the disadvantaged groups and the delivery of quality education that meets the diverse learning needs of all children, youth, and adults [4]. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the facilitators' engagement in advocacy towards inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program.

According to Abo [13], in the eastern part of Ethiopia, especially in two Hararghe zones of Oromiya Regional State, facilitators are deficient in the andragogical and pedagogical knowledge and skills that are required to facilitate adult trainees, which are mainly attributed to the fact that the majority of them (90.8%) were grade 10 certificate holders. This indicates that facilitators have deficiency in advocating the cases of adults with disabilities in adult literacy training programs. The study by Abo [13] further indicated that adults with disabilities in Ethiopia were not sorted out and special supports were not given (96.40); instructional contents were not supplemented by audiovisual instructional materials (68.7). As a result, facilitators were unable to deliver their responsibilities effectively. For example, adults with different sorts of disabilities such as visual, hearing, and physical disabilities in the adult literacy training centers were not identified, and accessible training environments were not made to help them attend the training effectively [13].

This is an incongruity with what is avowed in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia MoE [4] master plan for Special Needs and Inclusive Education in Ethiopia 2016–2025. This master plan bravely states that the state government will provide quality, relevant, and equitable adult literacy training opportunities to all adults with disabilities or those with special educational needs and ultimately enable them to fully participate in the socioeconomic development of the country. The other is that facilitators were not able to demonstrate various instructional media and audiovisual materials as well as practical sessions and visits to support adult trainees in the literacy training program.

In the Gedeo Zone, Ethiopia, there were no prior research findings that investigated the facilitators' engagement in advocacy towards inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program. Hence, this study sought to identify facilitators' engagement in adult literacy training programs towards the successful implementation of inclusive education. Based on the above notions, the following research questions were posed in conducting the study:

- (1) What advocacy mechanisms were used by the facilitators for inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program?
- (2) To what extent the advocacy mechanisms that employed by facilitators in the literacy training program for adults with disabilities are related to each other?

2. Literature Review

Engagement in advocacy is essential to the ongoing efforts at making education more inclusive for all [14]. Kern [15] affirms that facilitators who are engaged in advocacy services and have faith in the concept of inclusion can provide adults with disabilities with confidence and a comfortable training environment. According to different scholars like [16–18], inclusive education is not just a process through which awareness is raised, but also it is about changing practices. Advocacy for inclusion can be applied where learning is being discussed, designed, and practiced: within the family, community meetings, literacy training centers, educator training programs, ministerial level of the state, civil society, NGO and IGO offices, national and international conferences, and many other forums [14]. It also involves all the concerned bodies of an education and training delivery system to move towards a more inclusive education system and ultimately a more inclusive society.

According to National Adult Literacy Agent [19], adult literacy training is most successful when the adults are actively involved in the process and are encouraged to express their ideas and draw on their experiences. Adults should also be enabled to explore the methods and materials, which help them to be trained more effectively and to take an active part in defining their goals and planning the training program. This has implications for the training of tutors, teaching and learning approaches, choosing materials, and the assessment of learning by the facilitators who engaged in advocacy services for the inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program [19].

According to the Citizens Information Board [20],

Advocacy is a means of empowering people by supporting them to assert their views and claim their entitlements and where necessary representing and negotiating on their behalf. Advocacy can often be undertaken by people themselves, by their friends and relations, or by persons who have had similar experiences. Delivering a professional advocacy service means providing a trained person who, based on an understanding of a client's needs and wishes, will advise and support that client to make a decision or claim entitlement and who will, if appropriate, go on to negotiate or make a case for him/her in (P-5).

The concept and foundations of advocacy are well established, and its potential role for individuals who lack capacity, independence, self-determination, and self-realization [21] is acknowledged, but its uptake, legal foundation, and acceptance by the community are less clear. Hence, the researchers argue that the facilitators' engagement in advocacy is important to improve the involvement of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program in this study area. According to Asrat [22], successful inclusion practices need to address the basic services available in typical general training settings for people with disabilities.

Harris, Owen, and Ruiters [23] in their qualitative study explained that engagement in advocacy has several forms when working with adults with disabilities, ranging from

awareness raising and education to direct action. In addition to these Harris et al., Ref. [23] described engagement in advocacy interims of education and mentioned that education is a tool for empowering adults with disabilities to participate in community. Advocacy staff also believed that information translation was a key strategy for helping consumers to understand advocacy strategies, as well as their rights and responsibilities.

There are also some dimensions of the education and training settings, such as higher levels of engagement in advocacy from facilitators and colleagues showed better relationships with facilitators, or a stronger emphasis on developing intrinsic motivation for learning and understanding the content than an academic achievement, which favors more positive attitudes towards people with disabilities [5]. The factors mentioned above, however, were not analyzed at the level of specific education and training settings, but only at the level of individual adults, which is not under contemporary standards of analyzing the situation of adult literacy training settings [6].

All the literature sources reviewed for this study show that facilitator's engagement in advocacy towards inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs was investigated in qualitative approach. Therefore, this study will fill this gap as it used mixed research approach and gives more emphasis to quantitative data.

2.1. Theoretical Framework. Theories are important to validate the practice [24]. According to Macfarlane [24], an efficient theory could boost a facilitator's ability to work with others and also generate a range of ethical and logical solutions to educational problems. Hence, theory performs an imperative role in developing a teaching-learning curriculum and improving training practices for adults with disabilities.

Accordingly, this study was underpinned by the social constructivist theory of disability organized by the works of Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), the schooling theory of Barr and Smith [25], and Andragogical theory of Knowles [26]. The social constructivist theory of disability organized by the works of Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) mainly recognizes that disabilities are constructed based on interpretations made because of social values and beliefs [27]. Within this view, facilitators in inclusive education and training settings are expected to have positive attitudes and engagement in advocacy to improve the social values and beliefs of the community towards the inclusion of adults with disabilities in integrated functional adult education programs. The underlying premise is that facilitators are experts in different ways and their different experiences and understandings have values.

The social model of disability was developed as a reaction and alternative to the medical model, which defined disability in medical terms and located it as a problem of the "client." According to the social model, economic, cultural, attitudinal, physical, and social barriers hinder people with disabilities from participating fully in society, and so create disabilities [28]. Society is viewed as the problem, not the

person with the impairment. The social model fits in well with the agenda of the disability movement in Uganda, which advocates for the removal of barriers to the participation of persons with disabilities in all spheres of life [29]. Uganda's National Policy on Disability understands disability as follows:

Permanent and substantial functional limitation of daily life activities caused by physical, mental, or sensory impairment and environmental barriers resulting in limited participation ([30]:28).

This definition focuses on the disabling environment although the impairment is not ignored. However, the social model is criticized for downplaying the role of impairment and personal experiences [31]. The social model of disability resonates well with the critical research paradigm, which was adopted for mixed approach in this study and can be used to understand and contribute to reshaping oppressive structures and processes in society such as adults with disabilities [32]. The social model is relevant to this study because it assumes that the facilitators' engagement in advocacy may be influenced by the environmental factors for the inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs. This understanding can be used to work towards making such environmental factors more favorable to adults with disabilities and improving their quality of life. The framework helps to contextualize the training of adults with disabilities and facilitators' engagement in advocacy by locating them as a relation between the person with impairment and what Schneider [33] calls environmental factors, such as the influences of the conditions of the adults with disabilities, families, and the communities in which they live, work, and train together.

Under the schooling theory of Barr and Smith [25], pedagogical discourses could be helpful to understand the academic issues in training adults with disabilities. The discourses of inclusion interpret that if the appropriate environment could be provided and the facilitators have engagement in advocacy towards the inclusion of adults with disabilities, every adult would have equal potentialities to train. According to these authors, the right discourse of disability is linked pedagogically with inclusion discourse because it establishes the rights of adults with disabilities to equal training opportunities within the society in which they are involved.

However, the reality in Ethiopia is beyond these because most of the facilitators in the literacy training centers are 10th-grade certificate holders who have no pedagogical and andragogical knowledge and skills to address the specific training needs of adults with disabilities [34], but in this study area, there are some improvements in the quality of facilitators because from the total of 457 facilitators who are involved in the program there are about 108 who have diploma and degree certificates. Even if this is so, still it needs improvement as the majority of the facilitators are 10th-grade certificate holders. Therefore, the andragogical theory of Knowles

[26] states that the theory of andragogy is mainly related to the pedagogical discourse of adults.

According to Sisay and Yilfashewa [35], andragogical approaches to adult education are flexible teaching methods, learner-centered approach, and concert and experiential approach rather than abstract and theoretical. Also, Norrissa et al. (2014) assume that the participation of adults is based on their interest and opportunity, and facilitators recruited based on the interest of adults, the training tendency, and experiences should be grass rooted from the indigenous knowledge of adults. Creating training for society through adult literacy training programs is linked to lifelong learning opportunities that meet the diverse learning needs of all adults and contribute to the personal, societal, and economic development of an individual and the societies [36].

The main goal of the learning for life policy is creating and sustaining a literate citizen and strengthening institutional capacity through the development of a more coordinated structure for adult literacy provision within the societies [36]. Hence, the training programs for facilitators take andragogical approach as a core component. Generally, different theoretical views discussed above can serve as an engine for this study as it is centralized on the social approaches of training adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs in the Gedeo Zone, Ethiopia, because the current investigator believes that social approaches to learning and training can be realized through facilitators' highest engagement in advocacy towards the inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs in developing worlds such as Gedeo Zone, Ethiopia.

Generally, facilitators have a responsibility to support all individuals in inclusive literacy training settings by addressing their individual needs and acknowledging their differences, unless they have not understood the ideas of inclusive education.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design of the Study. The study employed a mixed-methods approach with explanatory sequential design, which involved the collection and analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data.

3.2. Sources of Data. The main sources of data for this study were adult literacy training program facilitators in the adult literacy training program in the 2020–2021 academic years in the Gedeo Zone, Ethiopia. In addition to facilitators, three adults with disabilities, three principals, three cluster supervisors, and four literacy program experts from town administrations, districts, and zonal levels of Gedeo Zone have participated.

3.3. Sampling. Different sampling techniques were used to select the representative sample from the total population under the study area. Without using proper sampling techniques, it may be difficult to include the whole population. Hence, the Gedeo Zone, Ethiopia, was selected purposively. In the study area, there are eight districts and

four town administrations. Of these, four districts and two town administrations were selected by the simple random sampling technique with a lottery system. According to the Gedeo Zone Education Department Report [37], there are four hundred fifty-seven (457) IFAEP facilitators in four districts and two town administrations, and among these, 173 were male and 41 were female, and a total of 214 facilitators were selected by stratified sampling technique to fill the questionnaire, thirty-eight for every four districts and thirty-one for each two town administrations using the following [38] survey sample size formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}, \quad (1)$$

where N is the total population, n is sample size, and e is error.

In addition to facilitators, three school principals, three cluster supervisors, three adults with disabilities, and four adult literacy program experts, from two district education offices, one town administration education unit, and a zonal education department, were selected by purposive sampling technique for interview based on their active involvement in the adult literacy training program.

3.4. Instruments. The survey instrument for this study was a Likert-type scale questionnaire adapted from the Meadows [39] dissertation with the permission of the institution from which the dissertation was published and it has been translated to Amharic to avoid the ambiguity that the respondents may face. However, the instrument in the Meadows [39] dissertation focuses on teachers' attitudes towards the use of accommodations in the classroom and on standardized tests. Therefore, the researchers used the accommodation scales in the classroom and standardized tests with major modifications to test the facilitators' engagement in advocacy. Then, a sample of 30 adult literacy program facilitators (18 male and 12 female) were selected randomly for the pilot study carried out in Chuko Town Administration of Sidama Regional State, Ethiopia, which is located at the border of the Gedeo Zone. The reliability of the instrument was checked by computing Cronbach's alpha for facilitators' engagement in advocacy, which was found to be 0.87. An interview guide was developed by researchers, and the interviews were conducted with facilitators, principals, supervisors, adults with disabilities, and literacy training program experts to support the quantitative data.

The researchers made semistructured interviews with three school principals, three cluster supervisors, three facilitators, three adults with disabilities, and four adult literacy program experts. The semistructured interview was conducted with the respondents on the issues related to the mechanisms that facilitators employed in providing advocacy services for adults with disabilities in the literacy training program. Thus, each interview session lasted for one hour for one interviewee, and one interviewee was interviewed for one time. Amharic version of interview questions was prepared, asked, coded, and transcribed into text. As it is clearly indicated in Levitt [40], the researchers used

qualitative approach to show the respondents' views without numbers and to ensure the dependability and credibility of this study. According to Levitt [40], qualitative approach is important to improve the involvement and interaction of different respondents in the study.

3.5. Data Analysis. Data were analyzed through descriptive statistics such as mean, SD, and percentage and inferential statistics such as Pearson's moment correlation to measure the mechanisms that facilitators used to advocate the cases of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program and word-by-word narrative description for the interview data. The findings of quantified data were depicted in the table and strengthened by the qualitative data.

4. Results

1. What advocacy mechanisms were used by the facilitators for inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program?

Table 1 depicts the mechanisms that facilitators used to advocate the cases of adults with disabilities in the functional adult literacy training program. Thus, the results in each case are presented as follows.

4.1. Providing an Awareness-Raising Training. In Table 1 ($M = 52.5$, $SD = 4.42$), 207 (98.1%) facilitators are engaged in advocacy services by providing awareness-raising training for adults with disabilities to speak up about themselves.

The respondent adult with disabilities explained that:

Facilitators' are engaged in awareness creation program for adults with disabilities in inclusive education policies (AWDs1 interviewee, September 2020).

One of the respondent facilitators (Fa3 interviewee) further elaborated that he has been engaged in advocacy services by providing awareness-raising training for adults with disabilities to speak up about them, maintaining social dialogues with other adults without disabilities in the training centers, and enhancing active participation of adults with disabilities in the functional adult education program training centers and within the community to bring changes in their life.

Similarly, other respondents have also forwarded the same responses with the above ideas. Thus, facilitators in this study are highly engaged in advocacy services by providing awareness-raising training for adults with disabilities in inclusive education policies, to maintain social interaction with others and to speak up about themselves.

4.2. Working Collaboratively with Colleagues. The result in Table 1 shows that ($M = 52.5$, $SD = 4.42$), 207 (98.1%) facilitators are engaged in advocacy services by working collaboratively with colleagues to maintain a conducive and accessible training environment for adults with disabilities.

TABLE 1: Summary of mean, SD, and percentage about the mechanisms that facilitators used to advocate the cases of adults with disabilities in IFAEP.

Items			SDA		DA		N		A		SA	
	M	SD	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. Providing an awareness-raising training	52.5	4.42	2	0.9	2	0.9	—	—	28	13.3	179	84.8
2. Working collaboratively with colleagues	52.5	4.42	2	0.9	2	0.9	—	—	37	17.5	170	80.6
3. Working collaboratively with the local government	52.5	4.42	1	0.5	2	0.9	—	—	40	19	168	79.6
4. Participating in community sensitization programs	52.5	4.42	1	0.5	2	0.9	1	0.5	44	20.9	163	77.3

One of the respondent principals stated that:

Facilitators' are working collaboratively with their colleagues to improve the mechanisms of supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of their classroom activities (Pr1 interviewee, September 2020).

In addition to this, the respondent adult with disabilities (AWDs1 interviewee) explained that facilitators are working collaboratively with colleagues in using the dramatization of the stories related to the everyday life of adults with disabilities to the task and easy ways of remembering their daily life, in the supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of their classroom activities as well as checking the adults' progress and recording progress through provision of homework and analyzing the performance to determine what the adults had learned.

The qualitative results from facilitators and adult literacy program experts ensured that facilitators are engaged in advocacy services by working collaboratively with colleagues to improve teaching-learning process for disabilities in adult literacy training program.

4.3. Working Collaboratively with the Local Government. Also, the results in Table 1 inferred that ($M = 52.5$, $SD = 4.42$), 208 (98.6%) facilitators are engaged in advocacy services by working collaboratively with the local government to provide awareness-raising training for adults with disabilities in inclusive policies and legislation in the literacy training programs.

In supporting the quantitative result, one of the respondent adults with disabilities (AWDs3 interviewee) explained that facilitators in this study area are engaged in advocacy services by working collaboratively with the local government to address the training needs of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program.

The respondent adult literacy program expert from Zonal Education Department also explained that:

Facilitators' are engaged in awareness creation program for adults with disabilities in inclusive education policies by working collaboratively with the local government by supervision, monitoring, and evaluation of their classroom activities as well as checking the adults' progress and recording progress through provision of homework and analyzing the performance to determine what the adults had learned (EX4 interviewee, September 2020).

4.4. Participating in Community Sensitization Programs. The result in Table 1 revealed that ($M = 52.5$, $SD = 4.42$), 207 (98.1%) respondents are engaged in advocacy services by participating in community sensitization programs for successful inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs.

The interview results from different respondents also strengthened the quantitative results as and one of the respondent facilitators in the study stated that:

I have been engaged in advocacy services by sensitizing the community to mobilize the resources to enhance the training for adults with disabilities in the adult literacy training program (Fa1 interviewee, September 2020).

In line with the above idea one of the respondent cluster supervisors (Su2 interviewee) also further states that facilitators are engaged in sensitizing the community to contribute resources that will help to support the inclusion practices of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program.

According to different respondents, facilitators in the current study are engaged in advocacy services by providing awareness-raising training, working collaboratively with colleagues and the local government to provide accessible training environments for adults with disabilities in the literacy training program while there are different challenging factors within the community that are affecting their engagement in advocacy differently regarding patience, tolerance, and accommodation. In addition to this, the respondents further elaborated that majority of facilitators have scarcities in philosophy of inclusive education and lack of knowledge and skills to provide advocacy services for adults with disabilities in the literacy training program.

The quantitative results in the Table 1 revealed that facilitators are highly engaged in advocacy services in all four areas of mechanisms that they employed towards inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs as the measured mean scores in each item are greater than the expected mean (12).

Generally, both the quantitative and qualitative results ensured that facilitators are engaged in advocacy services towards inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs using different mechanisms. Accordingly, they are engaged in providing an awareness-raising training, working collaboratively with colleagues and local governments, and sensitizing community to provide accessible

TABLE 2: Correlation among the respondents' variables.

Items	Correlations				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Facilitators' engagement in advocacy					
Pearson's correlation	1	0.683**	0.754**	0.766**	0.821**
Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
2. Providing an awareness-raising training					
Pearson's correlation		1	0.358	0.639**	0.466**
Sig. (2-tailed)			0.000	0.000	0.000
3. Working collaboratively with colleagues					
Pearson's correlation			1	0.513**	0.741**
Sig. (2-tailed)				0.000	0.000
4. Working collaboratively with the local governments					
Pearson's correlation				1	0.553**
Sig. (2-tailed)					0.000
5. Participating in community sensitization programs					
Pearson's correlation					1
Sig. (2-tailed)					

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

training environments for adults with disabilities in literacy training programs.

2. To what extent the advocacy mechanisms that employed by facilitators in the literacy training program for adults with disabilities are related to each other?

Intercorrelation among the various dimensions of the mechanisms that facilitators used to advocate the cases of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program (providing an awareness-raising training, working collaboratively with colleagues, working collaboratively with the local government, and participating in community sensitization programs) was examined to discern their relationship with the dependent variables such as the facilitators' engagement in advocacy.

Pearson's correlation coefficient showed that providing an awareness-raising training ($r(211) = 0.683^{**}$, $p < 0.01$) was statistically significant and moderately correlated with facilitators' engagement in advocacy. Also, it was found that working collaboratively with colleagues ($r(211) = 0.754^{**}$, $p < 0.01$) was statistically significant and strongly correlated with facilitators' engagement in advocacy. Working collaboratively with the local governments ($r(211) = 0.766^{**}$, $p < 0.01$) and participating in the community sensitization programs ($r(211) = 0.821^{**}$, $p < 0.01$) were also statistically significant and strongly correlated with the facilitators' engagement in advocacy. Therefore, Pearson's correlation coefficient in Table 2 revealed that each item for the mechanisms that facilitators used to advocate the cases of adults with disabilities are positively correlated with their engagement in advocacy towards the inclusion of adults with disabilities in functional adult education program.

5. Discussion

This study aims to contribute successful inclusion of adults with disabilities in literacy training program by improving

facilitators' engagement in advocacy towards the inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program in Gedeo Zone, Ethiopia. According to Asrat [22], successful inclusion practices need to address the basic services available in typical general training settings for adults with disabilities. The facilitators' engagement in advocacy within inclusive adult literacy training centers by itself is a way of practicing inclusive education. It is not just about telling adults with disabilities what to do, it is about working with them to establish a common and practically grounded understanding of what inclusive education means. In this way, advocacy should support people in challenging stereotypes and addressing their barriers to inclusion [18]. This means it is a process of supporting people to be reflective in making the connections between inclusive education concepts and practice in their own lives.

Harris, Owen, and Ruiter [23] are clearly indicated in their qualitative study that engagement in advocacy has several forms when working with adults with disabilities, which range from awareness raising and education to direct action. This study revealed that facilitators are engaged in advocacy towards inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs by providing awareness raising, working collaboratively with colleagues and the local government, and sensitizing the community. On the other hand, Harris et al. [23] described engagement in advocacy interims of education and mentioned that education is a tool for empowering adults with disabilities to participate in community.

The respondents in the study were also perceived that the social dialogue is a useful tool to get feedback and ideas to improve the conditions and pedagogic contexts in adult literacy training program, as agreed upon by Littleton and Howe [41]. The findings inferred dialogues between adults with disabilities and facilitators in the literacy training centers contributing to develop the inclusive environments in this study area. Collaboration with colleagues and society is at the center of social dialogue because social dialogue provides a clear, accessible, and well-illustrated case for the development of learning and training in inclusive settings [41].

Ownership within the institution for the active participation of adults with disabilities could be an example of empowering the entire classroom in the literacy training centers. Empowering the entire adult literacy training centers would be helpful to construct inclusive pedagogy, as Florian and Kershner [42] found that the element of inclusive pedagogy spread beyond individual training centers to include the beliefs, values, engagement, and decision-making processes that are evident in the wider contexts of the literacy training centers and the wider society.

According to the Association for the Development of Education in Africa [7], integrated functional adult education programs in Ethiopia must be considered the special needs of adults with disabilities, and therefore, facilitators' engagement in advocacy is important to put this policy document into practice. The concept and foundations of advocacy are well established; its potential role for individuals who lack capacity, independence, self-determination, and self-realization [21] is

undisputed, but its uptake, legal foundation, and acceptance by wider society are less clear. Therefore, the facilitators' engagement in advocacy by creating awareness in inclusive education policies in this study has its contribution to build legal foundation towards inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program.

According to National Adult Literacy Agent [19], adult literacy training is most successful when the adults are actively involved in the process and are encouraged to express their ideas and draw on their experiences. Adults should also be enabled to explore the methods and materials, which help them to train more effectively and to take an active part in defining their goals and planning the training program. This has implications for the training of tutors, teaching and learning approaches, choosing materials, and the assessment of learning by the facilitators who demonstrate engagement in advocacy for the training of adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs [19]. Advocacy is a collaborative process that ensures that the different stakeholders' perspectives are taken into consideration when developing its objectives, activities, and messages [43].

The facilitators in this study area are engaged in collaborative work with different stakeholders in the community, districts, and town administrations to provide accessible training environments for adults with disabilities in their literacy training centers. Respondents also appeared to be interested in the effective engagement in advocacy strategies. However, many controversial issues exist in the field of special education [44] and the respondents in this study are engaged in effective advocacy strategies to realize inclusion in adult literacy training programs. The effective engagement in advocacy is found in evidence-based practice, but facilitators in this study area did not conceptualize it as Ref. [45] did. According to Lester [45], the main principle of evidence-based practice is that it involves making decisions based on evidence rather than on, for instance, untested theory, customary practice, political dogma, or uncritical benchmarking.

Pearson's correlation coefficient also revealed that each mechanism used by facilitators in advocacy services towards inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs such as providing an awareness-raising training, working collaboratively with colleagues and the local government, and participating in the community sensitization programs is positively correlated. The correlation result of this study is in agreement based on the Piaw [46] correlation coefficient categorization for the strength of correlation between variables.

6. Conclusions

The findings of this study revealed that facilitators are highly engaged in advocacy services in all four areas of mechanisms that they are employed in providing advocacy services for adults with disabilities in the literacy training program. These are as follows:

- (i) Providing awareness-raising training for adults with disabilities to speak up about themselves

- (ii) Working collaboratively with the local government to provide awareness-raising training in inclusive education policies
- (iii) Working collaboratively with colleagues to maintain accessible training environments for adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs
- (iv) Participating in community sensitization program to mobilize resources that can help to address the training needs of adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs

Pearson's correlation coefficient also indicates that the items for mechanisms that facilitators used to advocate the cases of adults with disabilities are positively correlated with their engagement in advocacy towards inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program.

Finally, different challenging factors within the training centers that inhibited the facilitators' engagement in advocacy differently in terms of patience, tolerance, and accommodation were identified.

7. Recommendations

- (i) Facilitators would be provided with an in-depth knowledge of the philosophy of inclusion and expected to develop their engagement in advocacy that is required for accommodating adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs through the preservice and in-service teacher training program
- (ii) Facilitators, principals, supervisors, adults with disabilities, and the adult literacy program experts should work together to improve the facilitators' engagement in advocacy towards inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training program

8. Implications of the Findings

This study has several implications to facilitate education for adults with disabilities in the literacy training program in an inclusive setting. Among other things, the study has the following implications for improving future practice.

It enhances facilitators to show engagement in advocacy towards inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs.

- (i) It equips with knowledge of the facilitators, adults with disabilities, principals, supervisors, and adult literacy program experts about the importance of facilitators' engagement in advocacy towards inclusion of adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs
- (ii) The information derived from this study is used to develop guidelines for policymakers within education sectors to take necessary steps for ensuring the implementation of inclusive education for adults with disabilities in the literacy training programs
- (iii) It provides the information to facilitators about the mechanisms that they will be engaged in advocacy

services towards inclusion of adults with disabilities in literacy training programs

Data Availability

The main sources of data for this study were adult literacy training program facilitators in the functional adult education program in the 2020–2021 academic years in the Gedeo Zone, Ethiopia. In addition to facilitators, three adults with disabilities, three principals, three cluster supervisors, and four literacy program experts from town administrations, districts, and zonal levels of Gedeo Zone have participated.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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