

# SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OF COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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*Abstract—Social adjustment can be challenging to some people, especially those who were differently abled because they faced a bigger stressor. This study aim is to describe the social adjustment of college student with disabilities. This study was a qualitative-deductive study. The data of this study was collected using semi-structured interview to three informants, two of them are Deaf (hearing impairment) and the other person was physically disabled that require the use of wheel chair. Qualitative content analysis-deductive was used to analyze the data. The results in this study indicate that college student with disabilities represented some social attitudes in order to be accepted in their environments. Those attitudes were: taking part in social activities in the faculty, offering helps to others, showing empathy to their friends' conditions. However, there were some attitudes that were not optimally shown, those were: appreciating the values and others' opinion, and following the rules in the faculty. There were disabled student(s) that indicated having high passion to finish their study.*

*Keywords—social adjustment, college student with disabilities*

## 1. Introduction

This qualitative research was conducted to find out how disability students showed their efforts to adapt to college environment. This evidence should be identified because it helped disability students to have their full-function-interaction in spite of having limitation. Social adjustment became a challenge to them. It was because there were still negative stigma in the society related to the existence of disability students in the education institution.

Persons with disabilities is described as individual who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (United Nations, 2006). For about 15% of world population were having disabilities. This evidence made people with disabilities become the largest minority in the world (United Nations, 2006). This evidence made people with disabilities become the largest minority in the world. For about 82% of them are coming from developing countries; one of them is Indonesia (ILO, 2016). As the minority, people with disabilities are common with poverty issue that impacted on their accessibility to decent education, especially until higher education. However, there is an increase in the number of persons with disabilities who continue their education to the university level recently (Fichten, 1988).

There was difficulty and limitation in order to find out the amount of people with disabilities in Indonesia. Badan Pusat Statistik was the only source that registered the prevalence of people with disabilities through SUPAS (Survey Penduduk Antar Sensus) in 2015. They found that the percentage of people with disabilities in Indonesia was 8.56%. The data about disability students were collected through study center and disability services in universities in Indonesia. Based on the data collected until 2017, there were 56 disability students in

Sanata Dharma University (PSIBK, 2017), 112 disability students in Brawijaya University (PLSD UB, 2017), and 55 disability students in Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University (PLD UIN SUKA, 2017). The Ministry of Technology, Research and High Education (2017) reported that there were 401 disability students from 152 universities in Indonesia that came from various study programs.

It is an honor for disability students to be accepted in the university. However, they faced difficulties in adapting with the social environment (Firmanda, 2014). Mardjuki (from Soleh, 2016) noted that there were only 0.95% of disability students graduated from the university. It was because they have high risk of having difficulties and high stressor. The stressor were discrimination and negative viewpoint of their presence in the class (Groce & Kett, 2014). The negative stigma from the faculty and the other students (Troiano, 2003), the discrimination and the rejection from the faculty inhibit their social interaction and affect their self-esteem and self-efficacy level (Murray, Lombardi, Bender & Gerdes, 2012) and the probability to be dropped out increase because of the failure of social integration (Tinto, 1975). The difficulties the students face were social difficulties because it came from the environment and did not come from themselves (Groce & Kett, 2014). They need to adapt to the environment and harmonize their abilities and the demands of the society.

This social adjustment is important for disability students in their development phase. University students are on their phase of late teens – early adult which one of their fulfillment of duties is becoming part of a social group (Hurlock, 1980). Schneiders (1960), stated that social adjustment is defined as the ability to interact effectively towards social realism, social situation, and social relation so that the needs of the people to fulfill the social demands can be reached in acceptable and satisfying way.

An individual can socially adjust themselves with five aspects from Schneiders, there are:

- *Recognition*, which means the need to recognize and respect the rights of other persons in society.
- *Participation*, which means to get along with other persons and to foster the development of lasting friendships.
- *Social Approval*, which means interest in and sympathy for the welfare of other people.
- *Altruism*, which means the virtues of charity, altruism, and non-selfish attitude at the same time.
- *Conformity*, respect for the value and integrity of the laws, traditions, and customs of society.

Previous researches showed that the deaf students could conduct a social adjustment by utilizing their skills and they got some supports from their families (Lestari, 2016). However, this research only focused on one kind of disability, so that it had to refer to the social adjustment process of the other disabilities such as people with physical disability. Amsel and Fitchen (1988) found that the students with physical disability felt comfortable interacting with their friends who were non-disabled students.

Although previous researches noted that deaf students showed good social adjustment with the environment, in fact non-disabled students, if possible, tended to avoid interacting with disability students (Fitchen, 1988). Non-disabled students stated that they felt uncomfortable to interact with disability students (Fitchen, Robillar, Judd, and Amsel, 1988). This evidence made disability students felt more comfortable to interact with other students who had same disability (Fitchen, et al., 1988). This attitude made them be more hampered in constructing social integrity process.

The lack of researches in Indonesia that related to social adjustment of disability students with different disability students, encouraged the researcher to conduct this research. There were some factors that made disability students to have extra efforts to adapt to their social environments such as people with disabilities are still stigmatized and discriminated by society, also the lack assistants such as sign language interpreter, notulis, and tutor while in class (Stinson & Walter dalam Liu, 1999). The aims of this research is to find out and explore social adjustment conducted by disability students as the effort to fulfill social demands referring to some social adjustment aspects from Schneiders (1960).

## 2. Methodology

### A. Participants

The informants of this research were disability students in their first and second year of the university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Yogyakarta is one of the provinces that have highest number of disability students in Indonesia (Soleh, 2016). There were three informants, namely informant 1, informant 2, and informant 3. Two of the informants are Deaf (hearing impairment) and one of the informant was physically disabled that require the use of wheel chair. *These* two kind of disabilities were chosen based on the data of disability people

in Yogyakarta. People with physical disability were on the first place and people with deaf disability were on the third place (Disdukcapil, 2014). These three informants attained the age between 19-28 years old. They had different background of Senior High School; one came from SMA (Sekolah Menengah Atas), one came from SMK (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan), and the last came from SMALB-B. In Indonesia, SMALB B is specialized for students with deaf disability. Some detailed information about the informants were showed in the table 1 below:

Table 1: Informant's personal data information

No.	Information	Informant 1	Informant 2	Informant 3
1.	Initial	R	P	D
2.	Sex	Male	Male	Male
3.	Birth order	1	1	2
4.	Age	19 years old	28 years old	23 years old
5.	The specific age when having disabilities	12 years old	Since baby	1 year old
6.	Disabilities	Physically disabled (wheelchair user)	Deaf	Deaf
7.	Origin	Yogyakarta	Jakarta	Sumatera Barat
8.	Last education	SMA	SMALB	SMK
9.	Sibling(s)	-	2	1
10.	Father	Alive	Deceased	Alive
11.	Mother	Alive	Alive	Alive
12.	Dwelling	Parent's house	Boarding House	Boarding House

### B. Procedure

The researcher used purposive sampling in this research. This methodology was used to get specific informants that fit with the criteria. There were three kind of criteria used. First of all, the informant should be the people who have deaf and physical disabilities. Then, the informant should be university student in his first or second year, and attain the age between 18-30 years old. And the last, the informant should be registered as the student in the university in Yogyakarta. The researcher contacted the informants through one of the institutions in the university that give services to this kind of students.

There were three disability students who agreed to participate in this research. The data collection took place at the campus and a restaurant. In the beginning, the researcher built a rapport and explained in brief about the aims of the interview. Then, the researcher gave the paper of informed consent to the informants and asked permission to record the process of the interview. The process of interviewing was conducted in a conducive place and made the wheel chair user comfortable. Laptop was used to collect the data from deaf informants. The interview was conducted in Bahasa and took time for about 1-1.5 hours.

The researcher used semi-structured interview in order to gain more comprehensive and wider result in relation with the difficulties the informants faced while adapting the environment as disability students.

### C. *Research type and data analysis technique*

The researcher used a deductive-qualitative research. Deductive-qualitative research is a research conducted that refers to the previous research results or previous theories. Data gathering technique used was semi-structured interview to gain deeper information needed. The researcher used some open-ended questions (Creswell, 2014). Through this methodology, the researcher gives the informants chances to convey their experiences which were relevance and important for them as disability students (Holloway, 2001).

The data analysis technique used was qualitative content analysis by interpreting the content of the data in the form of text subjectively. It used systematic classification in the form of coding and pattern identification (Hsieh & Shannon, as cited in Supratiknya, 2015). Data processing were conducted in two steps, namely making matrix categorization and coding. The researchers also used deductive approach. The result of the interview then transcribed in verbatim form and was changed to some codes that fit on the matrix. Member checking were used to validate the data.

### 3. Results and Discussion

There were two main results of this research, namely the challenges the disability students faced and the social adjustment of the disability students at the university environment.

#### A. *The challenges faced by disability students*

The challenges that the disability students faced were various. It is because the disabilities were also various. Informant 1 (with physical disability) stated that he faced the difficulty when he had to move to other buildings because the lift did not work.

*“It is more about the lift that is error. I have one class in the laboratory; if the lift is error again, then everything is done. I have an experience when the lift was error at the first floor; and the lift is really stopped”.*

Informant 2 and 3 (with deaf disability) faced difficulties in understanding the lesson in the class because they were not guided by the interpreter and there was lack of direction and information board. It inhibited them to learn because they relied on their visual skill.

*“Typist, the interpreter was not the professional one, they have to learn more. We have lack of it...Ah, the information boards were also limited, and there was no direction to the toilet or map of the buildings like in the library”.*

As the students with deaf disability, informant 2 and 3 had an uncomfortable experience when they tried to communicate with the other students. There were rejection from the other students when the disability students wanted to join in group project. They were not involved in group discussion.

*“At that time, I asked them (non-disabled students) to join the group but they acted weird and seemed that they wanted to reject me but do not want to hurt me”.*

*“I feel that my friends are afraid to have communication with me. For example, “good morning”, they just greeted me and run away”.*

Informant 2 get disappointed when the other students invited him to high fives without any reason. It made him feel underestimated.

*“I do not like them (my friends) who invite me to high fives without any reason. What is the goal of that action? That is weird, I feel underestimated”.*

Informant 1 was not sure with his ability to get involved in the faculty activities. He was worried that he would be the troublesome for his friends because someone should help him pushing his wheel chair.

*“He asked me to join the committee, then I said,” how if everyone is busy with his business? What will I do?”, “there will be people around” he said. “Ah, I am not sure. I would be your troublesome” I said”.*

#### B. *Social adjustment*

The informants have some efforts to face their problems through some actions that helped them to reach social integrity.

- Appreciation; two informants showed that they tried to respect others' opinions while having discussion with their friends about their work result. However, they had lack of discussion because the informants felt that non-disabled students were worried to communicate with them. One of the informants with deaf disability did not show any respect yet; he slept during the lecture.

*“I joined the discussion in the group. I tried to help and I always listen to my friends' opinions”.*

- Participation; it emerged from the informant who had no problem in communication. He had many friends that helped him pushing his wheel chair. He had experienced student activities, although he limited himself on the faculty activities. The two other informants said that they joined non-academic activities in the university as interpreting teachers. Many non-disabled students were interested to join these activities.
- Social Agreement; all of the informants showed their sensitivity towards their friends. One of the informants tried not to burden his friends because they had to push his wheel chair. The others two tried to communicate slower than usual or type the thing they wanted to convey to their friends.

*“If they wanted to go to Kopma (cafeteria), I would ask them if I can entrust some snacks. I am sorry for them if I wanted to go with them, we have to go around the building”.*

*“Sometimes I used Sign Language slowly, because my friends do not easy to understand what I mean, they had not mastered it yet”.*

- Altruism; it appeared when one of the informants tried to help their friends in understanding the lesson. Another informant help his friends to enrich their knowledge in sign language and they responded it positively.

*“There came times when we learn about Javanese language, they asked me about it and I know everything”.*

*“My friends never learn about Sign Language, I tried to teach them by typing it in my cellphone. Some days ago I had chat with Dewi from English Literature”.*

Another informant showed altruism with different way by buying food to faculty's staff that he already known.

- Conformity; two informants tried to obey the rules of joining the class by coming in the class on time. One of the informants tended to collect the assignments on time. Another informant had not shown this aspect yet. He indicated some actions which were not appropriate with the values. He slept in the class and came late to the class.

#### 4. Conclusion

The result of this research indicated that the informants showed some efforts to adapt to the social environment, although there were several difficulties that should be faced. The researcher hopes that this result could help the disability students to adapt to the social environment after finishing the university phase. Besides, the researcher also hopes that the people around the disability students could support them and eliminate negative perception about them.

The informants faced many kind of challenges and they tried to face it with various strategies. The challenges were various depended on the disabilities. Informant with deaf disability tended to have difficulties in interacting with others. It was different with the informant with physical disability that had no difficulties in communicating with others; his friends always support him. Two informants with deaf disability faced the difficulties in accessing visual information that need an interpreter and the university should prepare it. A research conducted by Tarsidi (2012) found out that people with disabilities were still facing difficulties in accessing public places and getting the information. The informants said that it is important to have interpreter, minute's writer, and tutor to help disability students to survive at the class (Stinson and Walterm, as cited in Liu, 1999).

The informants said that they faced some problems. However, they tried to overcome it by showing some social attitudes which were accepted by the society (university

students). Two informants (the deaf student and the physical disability) indicated that they had their respects on his friends and they tried to give appropriate responds although one of them was facing difficulties in communicating. It was done to avoid conflict. However, the other informant had not shown his respect to his friends and his environment. Research conducted by Mader, Wagner and Sumi (2003), showed that conflict avoidance is used to maintain friendship relation.

One of the informants who had physical disability faced the difficulty in joining university activities, because he had high level of *pekiwuh* (abasement) while being the troublesome for his friends because they had to push his wheel chair. However, he said that he had his first experience joining social activity in the university and he was so happy with that. It is different with the informants who were deaf. They faced difficulties to get involved in the activities. Nevertheless, all of the informants indicated that they wanted to join the activities in the university but they were not sure with their abilities. Shevlin, Kenny and McNeela (2004) stated that disability students had same desire as non-disabled students to be involved in the university activities.

All of the informants showed their sensitivity and respects towards others' prosperity. If they wanted to develop this attitudes, it can help them to reach social integrity and have a good and harmonic relation with their friends. A research conducted by Daulay & Rahmawati (2016) showed that social behavior such as having empathy and respects each other were important part that supports the process of social adjustment for disability students.

Two informants indicated that they had altruism behavior that appeared in their action of helping others or giving others chances. While another informant showed that he was not selfish by buying something for his friends and sometimes he tried to help his friends. Similar results were found in Daulay & Rahmawati's (2016) research that stated personal satisfaction as the part of reaching social adjustment can be reach by having a purposeful and useful live.

Two informants tried to obey the rules and the values in the faculty. However, the other one had not indicated such behavior yet. Those various form of behavior and attitudes showed that even though the disability students had some limitations, they tried to overcome it so that they can be accepted in the society (university). This research tried to inform the reader that there is still big social gap between disability students with their social environment. This was the evidence that the society had not indicated appropriate actions toward the people with disabilities yet. The supports from the surroundings are important for them to not give up. However, all of the informants showed that they had high desires to finish their studies. It was because they thought they were the ones who are responsible for that.

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