

Subtheme: Social Challenges (Social Inclusion)

School Library Efforts to Fulfil Information Needs of The Visually-Impaired Students in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract

The ease of getting information is the right of every human being, including visually-impaired students. In reality, they sometimes have difficulty getting information. This is because not all school libraries provide sources of information in braille that is easy for visually-impaired students to understand. Even if there are information resources for visually-impaired students, the number is not as much information as that for normal people. This raises the question of how school libraries in Yogyakarta, Indonesia provide information resources for visually-impaired students. This is a qualitative study on how school libraries can support visually-impaired students with information resources for their needs. Data were collected through observation and interviews with school librarians in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This study was conducted at a school that has visually-impaired students in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

The study shows that the school library has a braille collection, but the number of collections is limited. Developing information resources in braille often faces budget constraints because the number of normal students is more than those of visually-impaired students so the priority of collection development is for normal students. Meanwhile, school librarians do not remain silent in providing services for visually-impaired students. Librarians develop digital collections as a solution to meet the information needs of visually-impaired students. The school also provides support for visually-impaired students to develop their passion by providing soft skills that can be used to achieve their goals. Visually-impaired students are active in extracurricular activities provided by librarians such as journalism and research. Visually-impaired students have the same opportunity to excel and develop their potential.

Keywords: *school library, information resources, information needs, visually-impaired students*

Introduction

The development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has an impact on the ease of access to information. Information becomes an unavoidable necessity in today's modern world. There are various ways for anyone in their effort to meet the information needs, one of which is through a library. Libraries can be a bridge for humans to get information. Moreover, libraries may become partners in the process of sharing information with their users. The same thing happened in the school libraries.

Students can maximize the existence of a library to explore various sources of information so that they can meet their information needs. In Indonesia, the law expresses that every Indonesian citizen has the same right to get an education. The existence of an inclusive school minimizes discrimination against Indonesian citizens to get knowledge. In Indonesia, inclusive schools are educational service systems that include children with special needs to study together with other normal students in regular schools.

Yogyakarta, which is known as a student city, has more than 70 inclusive schools consisting of kindergarten, basic schools, middle schools, and high schools. This indicates that this city is open to anyone who wants to study and there is no discrimination against students who have special needs in studying. They study with other normal students in the same class with similar subjects. This is in line with the statement contained in *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol*, recognizing the importance of accessibility to the physical, social, economic, and cultural environment, to health and education, and to information and communication, in enabling persons with disabilities to fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms (2022, p. 4).

One of the obstacles faced by children with special needs is their limited vision which is often called visually impaired. They need special education services. The same is true in terms of meeting their information needs. Based on the initial observations, although Yogyakarta, Indonesia has many inclusive schools, there are also contradictory facts. Not all-inclusive school libraries provide collections in braille that students with visual impairments may understand more easily. Even if there are available collections, the number is not as complete as the collection for normal students.

Literature Review

Information Needs

The development of ICT has an impact on the ease of obtaining information. Information has even become something that cannot be separated from the life of modern people as it is today. According to Kinanti & Erza (2020, p. 75) information needs are a situation where an individual feels the need to fulfill his or their curiosity as a manifestation of their lack of knowledge, aiming to satisfy their curiosity and to provide benefits that can be learned from the results of obtaining information.

In Yogyakarta, there are 6 state academic libraries, more than 17 private academic libraries, 1 city library and 4 regional libraries. This supports the creation of an atmosphere in the community learning process. The information needs of the community will be facilitated by the presence of easily accessible sources of information. Quoted from Tuominen in Naumer (2017, p. 2455) the concept of information needs is divided into 3 namely (a) *Information Transfer Model*; (b) *Constructivist or Cognitive View*; (c) *Social Constructionist or Social View*.

Information Needs for Visually-Impaired

The advancement of ICT has an impact on the ease of access to information in the world of education. Students can maximize this ease of access in an effort to fulfill their information needs, including the visually-impaired students. There are two factors that can cause the condition to occur, namely internal factors and external factors. Internal factors are factors that arise from the patient and occur while the patient is still in the womb, for example due to incomplete gestational age and genetic disorders. External factors are factors that arise outside of the patient and occur after birth, for example an accident that damages the cornea of the eye (Setiarani & Suchyadi, 2018, p. 16).

Vision limitations will affect students in their academic development.

“States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring (United Nations, 2022, p. 17)”.

Fulfilling Information Needs at School Libraries

Yogyakarta is popular for its various kinds of privileges, one of its features is the ease of getting an education. “The student city” icon has been embedded in this city since the old days. It is not surprising that this city is a favorite destination for continuing education in Indonesia. Another attraction of Yogyakarta is that this city is led by a governor who is also the Sultan of the Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat Sultanate as well as the center of the monarchical government in Java which has been around for more than 250 years (*Kraton Ngayogyakarta Hadiningrat*, n.d.).

The role of the Sultan of Yogyakarta, Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X and the previous sultan, in the development of education, is evident from the fact that a lot of land belonging to the sultanate or Kraton is used to establish schools and universities. This Yogyakarta leader has many fans, for his kindness to lead him to become an idol for his people. Various kinds of public facilities are repaired and beautified. All residents of Yogyakarta and tourists are made more comfortable in Yogyakarta. The open space in Yogyakarta is set to be disabled-friendly. Improvements in facilities and infrastructure also occur in the education sector. Education in schools will run smoothly if the knowledge transfer process does not experience obstacles. The school libraries have a big role in making this happen. For visually-impaired students who have limited vision, special services are needed as they are different from other normal students. This encourages school librarians to create services that are easy to understand for them. This is in line with the idea put forward by Irvall & Nielsen (2005, p. 12) who state that services for visually-impaired students can be in the form of (1) home delivery, (2) outreach services, (3) reading services, (4) consultation.

The right special services for visually-impaired students will have an impact on meeting their information needs in supporting the learning process. They have the same right to information as other normal students. They can understand library access, services, materials, and programs if librarians can provide packages of information in braille, provide resources in audio formats, and have a computer screen for regular consultation sessions. Librarian creativity can also be in the form of soft skills that visually-impaired students can use as life skills in the community.

Research Method

This is a qualitative study of how school libraries can support and meet the information needs of students with visual impairments. This study discusses the school libraries' meeting

the information needs of students who have visual impairments. Data were collected through observation and interviews with inclusive school librarians, namely SMA Muhammadiyah 4 Yogyakarta and MAN 2 Sleman, in the State of Yogyakarta. Here are the details of the informants:

No	Type of Informant	School Origin
1	Informant 1	Librarian of SMA Muhammadiyah 4, Yogyakarta
2	Informant 2	Librarian of MAN 2 Sleman, Yogyakarta

Discussion

Yogyakarta is targeted to become an accessible or disability-friendly city by 2024 (Ony, 2019). For this reason, efforts are being made to improve facilities in public spaces, for example installing special signs for the visually impaired, roads for wheelchairs. Another sector that is also experiencing improvement is education. More than 70 public schools in Yogyakarta are open to students with disabilities. This gives a sign that students with physical limitations can attend education in public schools. The same thing happens in 2 public schools, namely SMA Muhammadiyah 4 Yogyakarta and MAN 2 Sleman.

In inclusive schools, visually-impaired students sit in the same classrooms as other normal students. There is no difference in the delivery of learning materials. However, at inclusive schools, there are teaching assistants whose job is to help the visually-impaired students to cope with various problems that arise during their learning activities. This is in line with the results of the interview with informant 1, not all subject teachers understand braille, so a teaching assistant is needed for visually-impaired students. The teaching assistant play a role to help solve the difficulties experienced by visually-impaired students during the learning process.

The development of ICT with all kinds of applications available on smartphones makes it easier for visually-impaired students to get information. In an effort to fulfill their information needs, they are more often to use smartphones and access ebooks. SMA Muhammadiyah 4 Yogyakarta and MAN 2 Sleman have disabled-friendly libraries. In these two libraries, the collection in braille is still limited, but the visually impaired students are greatly helped by the digital collection that the libraries have. Based on the interview with informant 2, "visually-impaired students are actually one step ahead in terms of ICT compared to other normal

students". This shows that visually-impaired students do not experience problems in accessing information, even though the collection in braille is very limited.

There are interesting similarities between these two inclusive schools. The librarians have a role in equipping students in extracurricular programs according to their respective passions. Informant 1 teaches extracurricular journalism, the students are equipped with skills in writing a project that will be sent to a magazine or newspaper, including projects from visually-impaired students. Informant 2 said that visually-impaired students take part in extracurricular research which is taught directly by the head of the library. Visually impaired students who excel ever won national or international competitions. In addition, they are also equipped with skills in how to write short stories, poems, and even wikies.

In their daily lives, visually-impaired students are equipped with the skills to recognize each other's spaces. However, according to informant 2, the school has established a disabled service unit. The students' interest in this unit is great. This indicates that normal students' empathy towards students with special needs has begun to develop. Normal students quickly help visually-impaired students, including if visually-impaired students have difficulty in getting learning references.

Conclusion

Various types of meeting the needs of visually impaired students' information formats are not limited to braille. Currently, ICT has produced various applications for people with disabilities. Various applications make it easier for students with visual impairments to explore information like other normal students do, for example in accessing digital collections. There is no longer any discrimination for visually-impaired students who have limited access to information. This also applies to visually-impaired students to work and get their achievement. The inclusive school can support the passion of visually-impaired students through various kinds of soft skills that they may use as provisions for themselves. Support from the school is very much needed in order to provide a spirit of life for visually impaired students in continuing their dreams.

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Short biographies of the authors:

Ana Pujiastuti finished her bachelor in Library and Information Science of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta in 2012 and now he is continuing his postgraduate studies at the same university. Currently, she works as a librarian at Ahmad Dahlan University. She likes to write journal articles or books with the theme of promotion, information literacy and librarian knowledge development.

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