

STRENGTHEN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION IN IMPROVING LIBRARY SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Siti Wuryan, Muhamad Bisri Mustofa, Muhamad Khadavi Febrian

UIN Raden Intan Lampung

E-mail: bisrimustofa@radenintan.ac.id, muhamadkhadavifebrian@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study aims to strengthen interpersonal communication in improving library services for people with disabilities. This research is motivated by the neglect of people with disabilities when communicating their needs in library services. The method used in this study is a qualitative method, by conducting an in-depth case study approach. Data was obtained through online observation from websites that support data retrieval, in the form of books or journals available. The results showed that the training of librarians in interpersonal communication with users with disabilities should be implemented, librarians must be able to adapt to information and *Communication Technology. Communicate interpersonally librarians* must also pay attention to five important points, namely (1) Reliability, (2) Responsiveness, (3) Assurance, (4) Emphaty, (5) Tangible. Based on these results, interpersonal communication plays a role in improving library services for people with disabilities. The important role of interpersonal communication is because librarians can understand and help people with disabilities, and provide the same feelings that others get. And can minimize misunderstandings that will occur between librarians and users with disabilities.

Keywords: Library Services, People With Disabilities, Interpersonal Communication, Technology

Introduction

One of the institutions that provide information is the library, it is written in law No.43 of 2007 which in the Act states that the library has a function of supporting education, research, preservation, and information as well as recreational facilities used to improve the intelligence and culture of the nation. Thus, the library is required to be able to serve all users who come.¹

The library is one of the institutions that provide information, it is written in law No.43 of 2007 which in the Act states that the library serves as a place of education, research, preservation, information, and Recreation to improve the intelligence and culture of the nation.² In that case, the library is required to be able to serve all users who come.

However, in reality, not a few libraries in their services ignore a group of people who have disabilities. Often people with disabilities are overlooked in terms of accessibility to library services.³ Therefore, one of the efforts to improve library services requires interpersonal communication between librarians and people with disabilities. Interpersonal communication that occurs within the scope of the library usually leads to an object that is being observed or traced. Communication is done like a user who interacts with the librarian to find the information he needs.⁴

A person with a disability is the same as a person in general. What makes a little difference to people with disabilities is the obstacle in fulfilling their lives, so they are not able to participate optimally in society.

The background of the authorship of this journal can be attributed to the development of increasingly advanced information technology. Information technology offers the potential for wider access to information but is not yet fully a solution for people with disabilities. So the question arises, Why is it that libraries categorized as disability-friendly libraries are still very few?

In this journal, the authors also focus on developing strong interpersonal communication between librarians and users with disabilities. Good interpersonal communication will help librarians understand the needs of disability users and will provide more effective services, as well as provide the same experience as others.

Literature Review

Personal communication refers to the exchange of messages between individuals in person or face to face. It involves the use of verbal and nonverbal language to communicate, such as words, facial expressions, body movements, and voice intonation. Personal communication is essential in building strong

¹ Wahyuni Wahyuni, "Transformasi Layanan Disabilitas Pada Perpustakaan Perguruan Tinggi Di Era 4.0," *JPUA: Jurnal Perpustakaan Universitas Airlangga: Media Informasi Dan Komunikasi Kepustakawanan* 9, no. 2 (2020): 87, https://doi.org/10.20473/jpua.v9i2.2019.87-91.

² Yolanda Amalia Hidayat and Elnova Lusiana, "Optimalisasi Pelayanan Pada Pemustaka Penyandang Disabilitas Tunanetra Di Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia," *Nautical: Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin Indonesia* 1, no. 5 (2022): 367–78.

³ Muhammad Farhan Naufal and Husnita Husnita, "Pola Komunikasi Interpersonal Penyandang Disabilitas Ganda," *Borobudur Communication Review* 2, no. 2 (2022): 67–73, https://doi.org/10.31603/bcrev.5656.

⁴ M B Mustofa, I Silvia, and A Basyori, "Proses Komunikasi Interpersonal Dalam Lingkup Perpustakaan Melalui Model Konseling Layanan Pemustaka," *Jurnal El-Pustaka* 02, no. 01 (2021): 35–43, https://doi.org/10.24042/el-pustaka.v2i1.8769.

interpersonal relationships and mutual understanding. It allows individuals to share information, ideas, feelings, and needs more profoundly and directly than through indirect communication media, such as telephone or text messaging. According to DeVito, interpersonal communication is communication that takes place between two people who have a clear relationship; with several people connected.⁵ The situational perspective states that interpersonal communication is concerned with the interaction of two people who communicate simultaneously both verbally and non-verbally. Feedback from interpersonal communication is very fast, so interpersonal communication can be interpreted as communication carried out by two people who have experienced stages in interactions and relationships. Starting from the familiar level to the level of separation that repeats itself continuously.

Personal communication can occur in a variety of contexts, including within library services. In the context of library services, librarians 'knowledge of people with disabilities can be used as competence or expertise because competence in interpersonal communication adjusts to who librarians interact with, especially with users who have disabilities.

Interpersonal communication with people with disabilities in the library must be considered because the library is an institution that provides information to anyone regardless of anything. But in reality, several things make it difficult for librarians and users with disabilities to communicate internally. According to Campbell & Oliver and Seymour & Lupton in the article, one of the things that makes a bad experience for people with disabilities is an unfriendly environment. "Including poorly designed public spaces, inflexible timetables, inhospitable environments, and legislative infringements effectively disenfranchise many people with disabilities from physical participation in public life"⁶

Nowadays with the development of technology, librarians should have innovations in communicating with people with disabilities. However, the technology provided in innovation must also adapt to the needs and capabilities of users with disabilities. This is given that each person with disabilities has different characteristics and has its uniqueness.⁷

Research Methods

The method used in conducting this research is a qualitative method, with a case study approach namely "strengthening Interpersonal communication in improving Library Services for people with disabilities". Data obtained through online observations from websites that support the retrieval of data books, and journals are also available.

Result and Discussion Result

⁵ Joseph A. DeVito, *The Interpersonal Communication Book*, 16th ed. (Pearson Education, 2022).

⁶ Wendy Seymour and Deborah Lupton, "Holding the Line Online: Exploring Wired Relationships for People with Disabilities," *Disability and Society* 19, no. 4 (2004): 291–305, https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590410001689421.

⁷ Winda Anestya Ayunda, "Pemanfaatan Teknologi Informasi Dan Komunikasi Sebagai Upaya Peningkatan Layanan Perpustakaan Bagi Penyandang Disabilitas," *VISI PUSTAKA: Buletin Jaringan Informasi Antar Perpustakaan*, 2017.

In a study on strengthening interpersonal communication in improving library services for people with disabilities, it can be described as follows:

- a. In improving its services to users with disabilities through interpersonal communication, need for special training for librarians. Like being able to speak sign language, and being able to use letters in *braille*. Even the library has a librarian with disabilities so the process of communication between librarians and users is reciprocal. The library can also provide training in communication and information technology to users with disabilities.
- b. Librarians are expected to be able to understand the character of each user who has a disability. To create communication, it is also important for interpersonal communication to be able to understand the character so that users with disabilities feel more understood so that they can create good communication as expected with reciprocity.⁸
- c. In interpersonal communication to pemustaka disability, there are several important points, namely; (1) reliability (*Reliability*), (2) responsiveness (*Responsiveness*), (3) guarantee (*Assurance*), (4) attention (*Emphatically*), (5) physical evidence (*Tangible*).⁹
- d. Utilizing information and communication technology to be able to communicate interpersonally with users with disabilities. One of the technological developments to help interpersonal communication with people with disabilities is to use *Braille cells*, IMAP, *LCD*, etc.

Discussion

Users with disabilities

A person who has limitations in terms of physical, mental, or intellectual disability is called a disabled person. People with disabilities are often said to be disabled, Difabel stands for differently abled people (differences in ability) or special needs to replace the term disabled.¹⁰

Government regulation No. 72 of 1991 states, that the disabled are those people who have physical and mental disorders or behavior. Physical abnormalities include visual impairment, hearing impairment, and disability. Mental disorders include mild mental retardation and moderate mental retardation, while behavioral disorders include mental retardation.¹¹

Based on the above opinion, it can be concluded that people with disabilities can make it possible to cause problems, especially when communicating with

⁸ Naufal and Husnita, "Pola Komunikasi Interpersonal Penyandang Disabilitas Ganda."

⁹ Hesty Putri Agustini, "Kualitas Pelayanan Bagi Pemustaka Disabiltas Netra Di Braille Corner Perpustakaan Umum Kota Malang," *Repository.Unair.Co.Id* 53, no. 9 (2017): 1–13.

¹⁰ Wahyuni, "Transformasi Layanan Disabilitas Pada Perpustakaan Perguruan Tinggi Di Era 4.0."

¹¹ Ibid

others. However, if users with disabilities are provided with appropriate education and information services, they will be able to develop their potential optimally. Furthermore, it must be realized that physical and mental limitations do not erase them as citizens, including the right to access information (Safrudin Aziz, 2014).¹²

Speaking of rights, those with disabilities should deserve to be given excellent service like people in general in the library. Although they have limitations in interpersonal communication, they (people with disabilities) should not be ignored in the services in the library. To improve library services, libraries, and librarians are expected to have special disability services. Librarians through interpersonal communication with users can explain, explain, and provide information that there are special services for people with disabilities. Libraries with special disability services should be able to create peace and comfort in reading braille collections and listening to audiobooks for users.¹³

Interpersonal Communication with Disability Pemustaka

Interpersonal communication can also occur library, interpersonal communication that occurs between librarians and users who come is needed during the service process. When serving, the provision of information, attitudes, and actions by librarians will be influenced by interpersonal communication that occurs in the library.

Interpersonal communication is a vital aspect when one has a relationship with people within the scope of work. A librarian, for example, is required to be able to develop his skills in interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication is the delivery of information or messages from one person to another who receives the message to gain understanding or feedback.¹⁴ Especially if the user is someone who has a disability, librarians should not ignore the user even though it will be a little difficult to communicate interpersonal compared to normal users.

To streamline interpersonal communication with users with disabilities, librarians must at least understand the choice of words to be used by users with disabilities.

"In talking to disabled people, or about them, the preference today is for direct, accurate language. "Blind" is better than "unseeing," or "sightless." "Paraplegic" or "cerebral palsied" is preferable to such euphemisms as "your affliction," "your infirmity," or "your little problem."¹⁵

To strengthen interpersonal communication with users with disabilities to improve library services, librarians should pay attention to several things:

a. Reliability; There exist two main aspects. However, in terms of communication with users with disabilities, librarians must pay

¹² Ibid

¹³ Hidayat and Lusiana, "Optimalisasi Pelayanan Pada Pemustaka Penyandang Disabilitas Tunanetra Di Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia."

¹⁴ Triana Santi Hildayati Raudah, "Komunikasi Interpersonal Pustakawan Universitas Islam Negeri," *Komunikasi Interpersonal* 6, no. 2 (2018): 257–80.

¹⁵ Walter F. Stromer, "Disability and Interpersonal Communication," *Communication Education* 32, no. 4 (1983): 425–27, https://doi.org/10.1080/03634528309378564.

attention to aspects of *dependability*. That is, librarians can be trusted to provide and direct information to the needs or desires of users who have disabilities without having to discriminate.

- b. Responsiveness; Librarians at least have a dexterous responsiveness in communication, especially if the user needs information about library services. Responsiveness has a considerable influence on users, especially users who have disabilities. If the perception of disability users on responsiveness is better, the level of satisfaction of disability users will be higher. If the perception of disability users is low on responsiveness, then their satisfaction level will also decrease. Because users with disabilities have limitations in certain respects, it would be nice if librarians were given training, especially in communicating so that misunderstandings do not occur.
- c. Guarantee (*Assurance*); the ability to provide a sense of trust and confidence without any doubt in it. In communicating with users who have disabilities, librarians must be able to provide guarantees of existing services. That's because communication is one component in providing guarantees.
- d. Empathy; The empathy in question is not compassion, let alone communicating with a disabled person with such intonation. Disabled users will feel that they are being pitied, and it makes for a bad experience for them. Empathy should be an understanding of the needs of the user. To strengthen interpersonal communication with users with disabilities, it takes a high sense of empathy but not condescension.
- e. Physical evidence (*Tangible*); In improving its services, the library must be able to provide physical evidence of the information in circulation. Starting from librarians who have competence in communicating with users who have disabilities.

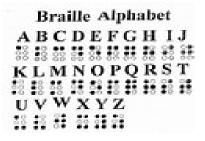
These five concepts can be used as knowledge and reference when communicating interpersonally with users with disabilities in the library. Because of these five concepts, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and physical evidence are an important part of building good relationships between librarians, library staff, and people with disabilities. By implementing these five things, communication in the library can improve the user experience, provide better services, and be able to create a friendly environment for all library visitors including users with disabilities.

Information and Communication Technology for Disability Users

To strengthen interpersonal communication with users with disabilities, information and communication technology is also needed. Perhaps some librarians have difficulty communicating, but with the progress of the Times and the development of technology, these difficulties can be minimized. Some assistive technologies that can make it easier for librarians to communicate with people with disabilities are:

a. Braille cell

Braille cell is a form of technology adapted from the braille alphabet.



Picture 1. Braille Alphabet

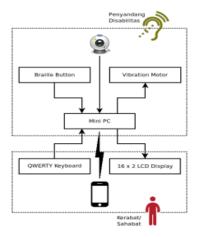
However, the printed braille font is still used, especially in printed collections.

b. IMAP

One form of communication protocol that is widely and easily used is the Internet Message Access Protocol (IMAP).¹⁶ IMAP (Internet Message Access Protocol) is a protocol used to access and manage email stored on a mail server. IMAP allows users to read, send, and organize email through an email client. This communication protocol can be used when users have physical limitations that make it difficult to meet with librarians. In this case, users with disabilities only need to give a message to the librarian, making it easier in terms of accessibility to existing collections.

With IMAP, users with disabilities can still connect with the library and communicate with librarians, as well as interact with library services through IMAP.

¹⁶ Agung Wahyu Setiawan, Abdullah Faqih A. Mubarok, and Akhmad Dyma H. Syababa, "Pengembangan Alat Bantu Komunikasi Bagi Penyandang Disabilitas Buta-Tuli Menggunakan IMAP," *Jurnal Teknologi Informasi Dan Ilmu Komputer* 6, no. 1 (2019): 93, https://doi.org/10.25126/jtiik.2019611263.



Picture 2. Diagram IMAP¹⁷

However, the use of IMAP in libraries may vary depending on the policy and technology implementation used by each library.

c. QWERTY Keyboard and LCD Display

QWERTY keyboard and LCD is one of the components in the technology commonly used in libraries and can provide benefits for people with disabilities when communicating while visiting. QWERTY keyboard is the most common type of keyboard used in computer devices, including computers used in libraries. This Keyboard uses the arrangement of the letters Q-W-E-R-T-Y in the first row of letters. This Keyboard is important for people with disabilities who may have limited motor or hand use, as well as speech limitations. With the QWERTY keyboard, they can use the keyboard keys easily and type text, so that communication with librarians will be smoother.

Next is the LCD, LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) is a display technology commonly used in devices such as computer monitors or other electronic displays. LCDs can provide visual clarity and important information for users, including people with disabilities. For example, LCDs are used by librarians to display important information such as book titles, call numbers, or instructions needed in the library. By using LCDs that are clear and easy to read, people with disabilities, especially those with limited vision, can access and understand the information.

By using the QWERTY keyboard, users with disabilities can communicate. An LCD can also be used to display the writing. So the QWERTY keyboard and LCD a complementary when used to communicate in the library to increase the value of the service. With the availability of assistive devices and materials, libraries can ensure that people with

¹⁷ Ibid

disabilities can access and utilize library resources in a way that suits their needs.

Conclusion

As one of the ways to improve library services for people with disabilities, interpersonal communication has an important role. Good interpersonal communication is to the needs of users who have disabilities. Some of the reasons why interpersonal communication is important are to understand the needs of people with disabilities, help people with disabilities feel heard and valued, minimize misunderstandings, and increase the accessibility of people with disabilities who come to visit. These four reasons are enough to make the library create an inclusive and friendly environment for users with disabilities. Then with the strengthening of interpersonal communication between librarians and users with disabilities existing library services will become more alive. It does not stop there, strengthening interpersonal communication will ensure that people with disabilities will get the same benefits from library services as others without discrimination or distinction.

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