

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEER SOCIAL SUPPORT AND ADJUSTMENT AMONG STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AT SEBELAS MARET UNIVERSITY

Ristia Dwi Susanti^{1*}, Sugini¹, Mahardika Supratiwi¹

^{1,2,3} Special Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia 57126

*Corresponding Email: ristiads8@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aims to determine the existence of a relationship between peer social support and adaptation among students with disabilities at Sebelas Maret University. The subjects of this study were 30 students with disabilities at Sebelas Maret University. The sampling technique used total sampling. This study employed peer social support and adaptation scales for data collection. Data analysis utilized Pearson Product Moment correlation. The results showed a correlation coefficient of 0.587 with $p = 0.001$ ($p < 0.05$), indicating a positive and significant relationship between peer social support and adaptation among students with disabilities at Sebelas Maret University, Surakarta.

Keywords: adaptation, peer social support, students with disabilities.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui ada atau tidaknya hubungan antara dukungan sosial teman sebaya dengan penyesuaian diri mahasiswa disabilitas di Universitas Sebelas Maret. Subjek pada penelitian ini sejumlah 30 mahasiswa disabilitas di Universitas Sebelas Maret. Teknik pengambilan sampel pada penelitian ini menggunakan teknik total sampling. Penelitian ini menggunakan skala dukungan sosial teman sebaya dan skala penyesuaian diri untuk pengumpulan data. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini yaitu menggunakan teknik korelasi Pearson Product Moment. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan nilai koefisien korelasi sebesar 0,587 dengan $p = 0,001$ ($p < 0,05$), berarti bahwa terdapat hubungan yang positif dan signifikan antara variabel dukungan sosial teman sebaya dengan variabel penyesuaian diri mahasiswa disabilitas di Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta

Kata kunci: dukungan sosial teman sebaya, mahasiswa disabilitas, penyesuaian diri.

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INTRODUCTION

Access to quality education is a fundamental right of every Indonesian citizen. As stated in Article 31, Paragraph 1 of the 1945 Constitution, every citizen has the right to education. The National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 2, further emphasizes that citizens with physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, and/or social disabilities are entitled to special education. Consequently, diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds in Indonesia have equal opportunities to access education. This includes individuals with disabilities, who also have the right to education.

According to Dini (2019), individuals with disabilities are those experiencing long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory limitations. These limitations hinder their full and effective participation

in society due to unequal opportunities. Indonesia's Ministry of Social Affairs (2017) categorizes disabilities into four types. Sensorik disabilities involve impairment of senses like visual, hearing, or speech. Physical disabilities affect bodily motor functions, commonly known as paralysis or physical disability. Intellectual disabilities entail below-average cognitive functioning. Mental disabilities involve emotional and behavioral disturbances.

The participation of individuals with disabilities in higher education remains critically low in Indonesia, with only 2.8% of individuals with disabilities attending university, as reported by Ansori (2022). This underrepresentation is largely attributed to various barriers that impede access to and success in higher education for students with disabilities. Zanki (2015) highlights that university education presents significant challenges for these students, particularly due to the need for adaptation to a new, often unaccommodating, academic and social environment. Disability, as defined by the Ministry of Health (2014), involves limitations in performing everyday activities due to physical, mental, or sensory impairments, which in turn create substantial obstacles in academic performance and integration into university life. Moreover, the National Socio-Economic Survey (2012) suggests that the lack of proper support systems for students with disabilities exacerbates these challenges, leading to higher dropout rates and lower academic achievements.

While previous studies have focused on these barriers, this research introduces a novel approach by exploring the role of peer social support in the adjustment process of students with disabilities at Sebelas Maret University. Unlike prior research, which has largely examined institutional and familial support, this study sheds light on the importance of peer relationships in fostering academic and social integration. By identifying the specific ways in which peer support can enhance adaptation, this research provides valuable insights into effective strategies for improving the university experience for students with disabilities.

According to data from Sebelas Maret University's Disability Studies Center (2023) and from research that done by Ansori (2022), 66 students with disabilities, including visual, hearing, and physical impairments, are enrolled. Researchers interviewed visually and hearing-impaired students, revealing ongoing challenges adapting to classroom learning and campus life. Visually impaired students face difficulties with animated presentations and assignments. However, they cope with campus navigation. Hearing-impaired students struggle with understanding instructors' high-level language, but peer support helps. Communication and language barriers pose significant social challenges .

According to Zanki's (2015) research on adaptation among students with disabilities in higher education, several challenges emerged. Visually impaired students faced difficulties overcoming self-doubt, underestimation of abilities, adapting to instructors' teaching methods, and navigating campus environments. Hearing-impaired students struggled with understanding visual cues and adapting to dynamic visual objects. Further research by Rosydi and Dwi (2020) highlighted additional challenges, including forming new friendships and adapting to academic demands, such as assignments and exams.

These findings underscore the need for targeted support services to facilitate successful integration of students with disabilities into university life.

The adaptation challenges faced by students with disabilities highlight the importance of peer support in facilitating adjustment within university environments (Schniders, cited in Ali & Asrori, 2015). Social support encompasses comfort, care, value, and respect from individuals or groups (Sarafino, 2019). Peer social support is expected to positively impact individuals, enabling effective adaptation to their environment, particularly for students with disabilities at Sebelas Maret University.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between peer social support and the adjustment of students with disabilities at Sebelas Maret University. Specifically, the study aims to assess how peer social support impacts students' ability to adapt both academically and socially, focusing on emotional support, encouragement, and peer interactions. This research aims to contribute to understanding the important role that peer relationships play in fostering emotional and social adaptation, which is particularly crucial for students with disabilities navigating university environments.

METHOD

This study employs a correlational quantitative approach to investigate the relationship between peer social support and adjustment among students with disabilities at Sebelas Maret University. The population consists of students with disabilities enrolled at the university, and the total sampling technique was used, where the sample size equals the population size. Data were collected using two validated and reliable questionnaires: the Peer Social Support Scale (35 items) and the Adjustment Scale (35 items). These instruments were designed to measure the extent of social support from peers and the level of academic and social adjustment of students. The Peer Social Support Scale includes items on emotional support, encouragement, and peer interactions, while the Adjustment Scale assesses both academic and social adaptation. Data collection was conducted through direct distribution of the questionnaires in classes and online platforms, ensuring maximum participation. Data analysis employed the Pearson Product Moment correlation using SPSS to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between peer social support and adjustment. Additionally, reliability and validity of the instruments were confirmed through expert review and pilot testing (Sarafino, 2019; Schneider, 1964).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis yielded significant results ($p = 0.001 < 0.05$), indicating a positive correlation between peer social support and adjustment among students with disabilities at Sebelas Maret University. The positive correlation coefficient ($r = 0.587$) suggests that increased peer social support significantly enhances adjustment to campus life. This study's findings are in line with previous research, such as Hasan and Handayani (2014), who found a significant

correlation ($p = 0.011 < 0.05$) between peer social support and adjustment among deaf students in inclusive schools, with a positive correlation coefficient ($r = 0.531$). Similarly, Rufaida and Kustanti (2017) discovered a positive relationship ($r_{xy} = 0.582$, $p = 0.00 < 0.05$) between peer social support and adjustment among Sumatran students at Diponegoro University, contributing 33.9% to adjustment. These studies affirm the crucial role of peer social support in facilitating adjustment (Hasan & Handayani, 2014; Rufaida & Kustanti, 2017).

However, contrasting findings also emerged from Zalika and Rusmawati's (2022) study, which reported a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.789$, $p = 0.000$), differing from the moderate correlations (0.531, 0.582) found in the current study and previous research. Additionally, Liling and Sarajar (2023) found a weaker correlation ($r = 0.243$) among Torajan students. These discrepancies highlight that the strength of the correlation between peer social support and adjustment may vary significantly across different populations and contexts. Similar studies by Taylor and Nelson (2018) showed that peer support could have different degrees of impact depending on cultural context, which may explain variations in the strength of the correlations across studies (Taylor & Nelson, 2018).

This study reveals a moderate correlation ($r = 0.587$) between peer social support and adjustment among students with disabilities at Sebelas Maret University. While the study confirms the importance of peer support in the adjustment process, it also has some limitations. The moderate strength of the correlation, while statistically significant, suggests that peer support is one of several factors influencing adjustment, and other variables such as institutional support, family involvement, and individual coping mechanisms might play a role. Furthermore, the sample size (137 students) and the focus on a single university limit the generalizability of the findings to other settings or regions (Kuh, 2016).

The strength of this research lies in its focus on a specific population where the role of peer support has been underexplored, particularly in the Indonesian context. By identifying the positive impact of peer support on adjustment, this study contributes to the literature on disability studies and higher education, offering valuable insights into how peer relationships can foster a more inclusive academic environment (Schneider, 1964). However, future studies should include larger and more diverse samples, explore longitudinal effects, and consider other factors that influence students' adaptation to university life, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the adjustment process for students with disabilities (Sarafino, 2019; Schneider, 1964).

CONCLUSION

This study reveals a significant positive correlation between peer social support and the adjustment of students with disabilities at Sebelas Maret University. The findings suggest that higher levels of peer social support are associated with better adjustment to campus life, both academically and socially. Peer social support plays a crucial role in helping students with disabilities adapt more effectively to the university environment.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that universities prioritize the development of

structured peer support programs, such as peer mentoring programs, to assist students with disabilities in adapting to both academic and social life. Additionally, further research using a longitudinal approach could be conducted to evaluate the long-term impact of peer social support on the academic success and mental well-being of students with disabilities.

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