
Disability Inclusive Employment Opportunity: Experiences of Deaf Young Adults

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Abstract: A person with a disability has a higher risk of experiencing limited opportunities for employment and a higher rate of poverty. Deaf children are considered persons with disability, they are children with special needs characterized by loss of hearing function. In terms of deaf children's transition from school to the workplace, there's a necessity for them to gain vocational skills. Thus, teachers play an important role in providing support and mentoring to deaf children in determining their goals for college or work. This study aimed to describe how the transition process of deaf children from school to the workplace including the support they received from their teachers at school. This research used a qualitative descriptive approach. The main subjects of this research were deaf young adults who are currently employed at Sunyi Coffee. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and observations. In terms of data analysis, data reduction, data display, and generating a conclusion. The research findings showed that the two subjects have differences in the process of their transitioning from school to the workplace. The first subject received vocational training that matched his interest but applied to various types of jobs. The second subject's vocational training was not matched his interest but found a job that is suitable for his training.

Keywords: transitions; deaf young adults; workplace; Sunyi Coffee

Kesempatan Kerja yang Inklusif untuk Penyandang Disabilitas: Pengalaman Penyandang Hamabatan Pendengaran

Abstrak: Penyandang disabilitas berisiko lebih tinggi mengalami tingkat kemiskinan dan keterbatasan kesempatan kerja. Penyandang hambatan pendengaran dianggap sebagai penyandang disabilitas karena kehilangan fungsi pendengaran. Keterampilan vokasional sangat penting dalam transisi penyandang hambatan pendengaran dari sekolah menuju dunia kerja. Oleh karena itu, guru sangat penting untuk mendukung dan membimbing penyandang hambatan pendengaran dalam menentukan pilihan mereka untuk kuliah atau bekerja. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menggambarkan bagaimana transisi penyandang hambatan pendengaran dari sekolah menuju dunia kerja, serta dukungan yang diterima penyandang hambatan pendengaran dari guru-guru di sekolah. Studi ini menggunakan metodologi deskriptif kualitatif. Penyandang hambatan pendengaran yang bekerja di Sunyi Coffee dengan jumlah subjek 2 orang yang merupakan subjek utama penelitian ini. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dan observasi. Proses pengumpulan data dilakukan mulai dari tahap analisis, pengurangan, visualisasi, dan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedua subjek berbeda saat beralih dari sekolah ke tempat kerja. Subjek pertama menerima pelatihan vokasi yang sesuai dengan minatnya tetapi melamar berbagai pekerjaan, sedangkan subjek kedua menemukan pekerjaan yang sesuai dengan pelatihannya.

Kata Kunci: transisi, penyandang hambatan pendengaran, dunia kerja, Sunyi Coffee.

INTRODUCTION

Proper transition education is a cornerstone of the holistic development of children with special needs and disabilities. It provides a structured pathway for them to navigate the transition from school to independent, sustainable lives within their communities. This form of education encompasses not only vocational skills but also life skills, self-awareness, and emotional resilience, all essential for their integration into society and the workforce. Despite its recognized importance, however, the implementation of transition programs for students with special needs and disabilities (SEND) faces numerous challenges that hinder its effectiveness (Syarqawi, 2018).

One of the most pressing issues is inadequate planning, which often fails to address the individualized needs of SEND students. Many transition programs are generic, leaving gaps in catering to the specific disabilities, abilities, and future aspirations of these students. This lack of customization impedes the development of tailored strategies that align with each child's unique strengths and challenges. Moreover, limited access to workplace-related information, such as details on inclusive employment opportunities and the skills required for specific job markets, further restricts the success of these programs. Without such critical resources, both students and their families are left ill-equipped to make informed decisions about career paths or higher education options (Achyana & Putra, 2020).

Another significant barrier is the lack of collaboration among key stakeholders, including schools, families, employers, and community organizations. Effective transition education demands a multidisciplinary approach where educators, counselors, employers, and social workers work together to provide a seamless and supportive transition process. Unfortunately, the absence of this coordinated effort often results in fragmented programs that fail to bridge the gap between education and real-world opportunities (Intan, 2020). Furthermore, resource constraints, such as insufficient funding, inadequate teacher training, and the unavailability of assistive technologies, exacerbate these challenges. Schools may lack the infrastructure and expertise needed to deliver high-quality transition programs, leaving SEND students underserved and underprepared.

In Indonesia, the situation is no different. Although the government has implemented laws such as *Undang-Undang No 4 Tahun 1997* to recognize the rights of individuals with disabilities, practical implementation remains a challenge. For instance, while the law guarantees equal opportunities in education and employment, many deaf students face barriers in accessing inclusive working environments. These challenges highlight the urgent need for robust communication skills training, including proficiency in sign language and strategies for engaging with diverse audiences (Wahyuningsih, 2014). Schools play a pivotal role in equipping deaf students with these skills, preparing them to navigate the complexities of the labor market and societal interactions.

Despite these challenges, there have been notable successes in promoting inclusive education and employment opportunities. For example, vocational training programs tailored to the specific needs of deaf students have shown significant promise. Research indicates that early identification of vocational interests and structured training programs can help students transition seamlessly into meaningful careers (Almaira, 2021). Such programs not only build technical skills but also foster confidence, independence, and resilience, which are crucial for their personal and professional growth.

Innovations in communication have also played a transformative role in supporting deaf students. Strategies such as kinetic communication (facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact) and haptics (touch-based signals) have proven effective in bridging communication gaps. These methods, combined with vocational training, empower deaf students to interact effectively with both peers and teachers, enhancing their learning outcomes and social integration (Rahmah & Kholiq, 2018). Schools have leveraged these innovations to create inclusive environments where deaf students can thrive academically and socially.

Furthermore, collaborations between schools and the corporate sector have opened new avenues for inclusive employment. Companies like PT. Parakerja with Disabilities Can and initiatives like Sunyi Coffee exemplify how inclusive practices can transform the employment landscape for people with disabilities. PT. Parakerja uses a platform equipped with Indonesian Sign Language (Bisindo) learning features to foster communication and inclusivity in the workplace (Achyana & Putra, 2020). Similarly, Sunyi Coffee provides job opportunities and training for people with disabilities, showcasing their potential to the broader community. These initiatives not only create inclusive work environments but also challenge societal perceptions about the capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

This study aims to explore the stages of transition experienced by deaf young adults who have successfully secured disability-inclusive employment opportunities. By focusing on the experiences of individuals working at Sunyi Coffee, the research seeks to provide insights into the factors that contribute to successful transitions from school to the labor market. Specifically, the study addresses the following questions: (1) How is the subjects' transition process in school? (2) How is the subjects' experience in job seeking after school?. Through this exploration, the research hopes to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on inclusive education and employment, offering practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, and employers. By addressing the gaps and building on

the successes of existing programs, we can create a more equitable future for all individuals with disabilities.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, grounded in post-positivist philosophy, to examine the real-life experiences of deaf young adults in transitioning from school to inclusive employment opportunities. Qualitative descriptive research focuses on understanding phenomena as they naturally occur, without experimental manipulation. This design was chosen to explore the nuanced stages of transition these individuals experienced, particularly in the context of their employment at Sunyi Coffee.

Setting and Participants

The research was conducted at Sunyi Coffee Yogyakarta, an inclusive workplace that employs individuals with disabilities. The participants were two deaf young adults who had been working at Sunyi Coffee for nearly a year at the time of the study. One participant worked as a barista, while the other was employed as a cook. These participants were selected due to their accessibility and relevance to the study's objectives. To ensure effective communication, the researchers employed a professional sign language interpreter during the interviews. This facilitated clear and accurate data collection.

Data Collection

Data were gathered through two primary methods:

1. In-depth Interviews: A semi-structured interview guide was developed, focusing on the participants' transition processes from school to the workplace. Questions explored their experiences in school, vocational training, and the challenges they faced during job seeking.
2. Observations: Field observations were conducted at Sunyi Coffee to understand how the participants interacted with colleagues and customers. This provided additional insights into their integration into the workplace and the inclusivity of the environment.

The interviews and observations were documented through audio recordings and detailed field notes. Triangulation was used to ensure data validity by comparing findings from multiple sources.

Thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), was employed to analyze the data. The process included:

1. Familiarization: Transcriptions and field notes were reviewed thoroughly.
2. Coding: Data segments were coded based on relevance to the research questions.
3. Theme Development: Codes were grouped into broader themes that represented significant aspects of the participants' experiences.
4. Interpretation: Themes were interpreted to draw conclusions and answer the research questions.

Tabel 1. The following instruments were used in the study. Table 1

Indicator	Sub indicator
What is the process of career guidance for deaf children in school towards the workplace?	1. Where did the subject go to school?
	2. What do you learn at school?
	3. What was your favorite subject at school?
	4. Why do you like the subject?
	5. When did you start learning vocational skills?
	6. What vocational skills were you interested in at school?
	7. Why did you choose that skill?
	8. Are there any programs that you have participated in before finishing school? Like an internship or training program.
	9. What's your goal after graduating from school? Before working in Sunyi Coffee.
	10. What are you doing to realize this goal?
	11. How can you work in Sunyi Coffee?
	12. How do you interact with your friends who work at Sunyi Coffee?

	13. How do you interact with customers who come to Sunyi Coffee?
What strategies do teachers teach deaf children in school towards the workplace?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How do your teachers teach you vocational skills?2. What are the supports provided by your teachers in realizing the vocational skills you are interested in?3. When you were at school, did you get the facilities and infrastructure provided by the teacher in realizing the vocational skills you are interested in?4. Does your teacher support you to realize the vocational skills you are interested in?5. What kind of support do your teachers give you to realize the vocational skills you are interested in?6. Did your teachers give you freedom in choosing your career goals when you finished school?7. How do your teachers support your chosen career goals?8. Is there cooperation between the school and other parties in realizing career goals towards the future?9. With which parties does the school collaborate?10. Does the support provided by your teachers at school help you realize your career goals for the future?11. Do you have a good relationship with your teachers in realizing your career goals for the future?

Instrument adapted and modified according to the characteristics of the child using Transition Assessment Tools (Cline, 2005).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Transition Education Program in a School Setting

The interviews with subjects employed at Sunyi Coffee revealed that both individuals underwent comprehensive formal education, from elementary to vocational school, where they gained valuable exposure to vocational training. Their schools offered diverse programs, including culinary arts, automotive skills, woodworking, and welding. Each subject participated in two days of weekly vocational training tailored to their interests.

While the subjects attended different schools, they experienced similarities in support systems. Teachers played a pivotal role by encouraging students to select programs aligned with their career aspirations, providing freedom in vocational choices, and facilitating practical learning opportunities. The schools also offered well-equipped facilities and mentorship that enhanced their vocational skills. Additionally, the apprenticeship programs provided a significant foundation for their transition, although the duration varied—one subject participated in a three-month automotive apprenticeship, while the other completed a six-month culinary program.

The findings indicate that transition education programs for deaf students generally followed three main phases:

1. **Selection of Vocational Interests:** Students were guided to explore their talents and interests to identify suitable career paths.
2. **Career Goal Identification:** Teachers supported the development of career aspirations through mentorship and tailored advice.
3. **Apprenticeship Schemes:** Practical training offered real-world exposure to help students transition into professional environments.

These programs align with research highlighting the importance of vocational training and structured support in preparing students with disabilities for independent adulthood (Almaira, 2021; Andini, 2020). The role of schools in facilitating transition programs was evident in both subjects' experiences. Schools provided specialized vocational training in various fields, such as culinary arts, automotive skills, and welding. These programs not only allowed the subjects to develop technical skills but also provided them with hands-on experience through apprenticeship schemes. This aligns with research suggesting that vocational training tailored to students' interests significantly enhances their career readiness (Almaira, 2021; Nanda, 2014). Teachers were instrumental in guiding the subjects,

offering personalized support and encouragement. They provided freedom in selecting vocational tracks that matched the students' interests while ensuring the programs aligned with the available facilities and infrastructure. This is consistent with findings from Supriyanto (2020), which emphasize the importance of experienced teachers and adequate facilities in supporting deaf students' vocational skill development.

However, post-graduation experiences varied. One subject struggled with disorientation when balancing higher education and job-seeking, reflecting Holland's theory of career choice. According to Holland, a mismatch between career goals and vocational interests can lead to confusion, as seen in this subject's transition journey (Zuckerman & Lo, 2021). In contrast, the second subject followed a more streamlined path, leveraging the skills developed during vocational training to secure employment at Sunyi Coffee after overcoming initial challenges in a non-inclusive workplace.

Transition Process to Entering the Workplace

The transition process from school to employment differed between the two subjects, reflecting the influence of individual circumstances and opportunities.

1. Subject 1:

This subject experienced a six-phase transition:

- a. Apprenticeship Stage: Participated in a three-month program that provided short-term employment exposure.
- b. Decision-Making Phase: Faced the dilemma of choosing between work and higher education.
- c. Disorientation Stage: Experienced confusion due to conflicting aspirations and limited inclusive opportunities.
- d. Experience Stage: Enrolled in university but struggled with online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to renewed job searches.
- e. Uncertainty: Repeated cycles of indecision due to challenges balancing work and education.
- f. Inclusive Opportunity: Found stable employment at Sunyi Coffee through social media, resolving his transition challenges.

2. Subject 2

This subject underwent a more streamlined four-phase transition:

- a. Apprenticeship Scheme: Completed a culinary program during vocational school.
- b. Decision-Making Phase: Opted to work immediately due to economic constraints, foregoing higher education.
- c. Job Searching: Initially worked at a regular café but faced communication barriers with colleagues.
- d. Inclusive Employment Opportunity: Found an inclusive workplace at Sunyi Coffee after seven months of searching.

The subjects' ultimate success was heavily influenced by the inclusive practices at Sunyi Coffee. This aligns with Achyana and Putra's (2020) findings, which highlight the importance of disability-inclusive employment in providing long-term opportunities for people with disabilities. Sunyi Coffee not only created a supportive environment but also offered training programs that enhanced the subjects' soft skills, such as teamwork and adaptability, critical for workplace integration (Purnomo, 2017; Sandroto, 2021). Both subjects benefited from developing soft skills during their transition. Research shows that soft skills, including communication, adaptability, and self-management, are essential for success in both academia and professional settings (Erland et al., 2022). The training provided by Sunyi Coffee allowed the subjects to refine these skills, facilitating their adjustment to the work environment and proving their capability to perform alongside non-disabled peers. This study supports Holland's theory of career choice, which emphasizes the importance of aligning vocational interests with career paths. When individuals pursue careers that match their skills and interests, they are more likely to thrive and achieve job satisfaction (Zainudin et al., 2020). Both subjects demonstrated the ability to make independent career choices, highlighting the role of self-determination in successful transitions.

Key Insights and Implications

1. Role of Schools and Teachers:

Teachers were instrumental in guiding students through vocational training and career exploration. Their support extended beyond academic mentorship to include emotional encouragement, which helped students navigate challenges during their transitions. This underscores the importance of teacher training in inclusive education methods, as highlighted in prior studies (Supriyanto, 2020).

2. Importance of Inclusive Employment:

The availability of disability-inclusive workplaces like Sunyi Coffee was pivotal in providing sustainable employment for the subjects. These environments addressed communication barriers and offered supportive communities, enabling the subjects to thrive professionally.

3. Challenges in Transition Programs:

Despite the benefits of structured education programs, challenges such as limited inclusive opportunities, economic constraints, and insufficient resources for deaf students were evident. Addressing these issues requires greater collaboration among schools, employers, and policymakers to expand disability-inclusive programs (Achyana & Putra, 2020).

4. Empowerment through Vocational Training:

Both subjects demonstrated increased independence and adaptability due to their vocational training. This finding reinforces the need for personalized, interest-based training to equip students with the skills required for modern workplaces (Areisy & Sudira, 2022).

The transition process for deaf young adults is complex, requiring tailored support from schools, teachers, and inclusive employers. The findings emphasize the need for structured vocational training, mentorship, and opportunities in disability-inclusive workplaces. Sunyi Coffee serves as an exemplary model, demonstrating that with the right support, deaf individuals can achieve professional success and prove that limitations are not barriers to employment. This study underscores the importance of creating pathways that empower deaf students to explore their potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

CONCLUSION

Deaf children who receive appropriate transition education and access to disability-inclusive employment have a greater likelihood of achieving long-term employment. Transition education, including career guidance, plays a crucial role in preparing children for the workforce. The experiences of the two young adults in this study provide empirical support for Holland's theory, demonstrating that aligning career choices with interests leads to successful transitions.

This study identified five key stages in the job-seeking journey of deaf young adults: (1) apprenticeship, (2) decision-making, (3) disorientation/confusion, (4) job searching, and (5) disability-inclusive employment opportunity. The findings highlight the importance of expanding inclusive employment opportunities as a means of ensuring sustainability for deaf individuals. Policymakers and stakeholders are encouraged to use these insights to develop inclusive programs that promote economic empowerment and integration for persons with disabilities.

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