Implementation Of Disability Student Assistance At PGRI Argopuro University In Jember: A Descriptive Study Of Strategies, Challenges, And Impacts

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of a support program for students with disabilities at Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember by examining the strategies, challenges, and impacts on their learning process and social engagement. A qualitative approach with a descriptive study method was employed, utilizing in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis as data collection techniques. The findings reveal that academic and social support programs have been implemented through adaptive learning services, peer volunteer assistance, academic affirmative policies, and social activity integration. Despite supportive policies and facilities, challenges remain in terms of limited trained personnel, inadequate campus infrastructure accessibility, and insufficient understanding of inclusive education among lecturers and staff. The program has positively influenced academic comprehension, self-confidence, and social participation among students with disabilities. These findings reinforce the inclusive education theory, emphasizing the importance of collaboration among all campus elements to foster an equitable and inclusive learning environment. Program success relies on sustainable mentoring training, strengthened inclusive policies, and synergy between institutions and external stakeholders.

Keywords: Inclusive education, students with disabilities, mentoring, accessibility, higher education



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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education in higher education is a fundamental right for every individual, including students with disabilities, and is an approach that guarantees access to education for all individuals without discrimination. In Indonesia, this policy is reinforced by Ministerial Regulation No. 46 of 2017 concerning Special Education and Special Services in Higher Education, which emphasises the importance of providing equal educational services for students with disabilities, as well as Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities.

The reality on the ground shows that students with disabilities often face various challenges in accessing equal educational services, both academically and socially. Limitations in infrastructure, a lack of understanding among academic staff regarding specific needs, and minimal institutional support present significant obstacles for them (Sunardi et al., 2020). One of the essential services required in education is mentoring for students with disabilities.

The mentoring model for students with disabilities can encompass various forms of support, such as academic, social, and emotional mentoring. Academic mentoring includes assistance in

understanding course material, adapting teaching methods, and utilising assistive technology. This mentoring model can involve support from peers (peer mentoring), lecturers, or specialised support staff, while social and emotional mentoring aims to help students with disabilities adapt to the campus environment, build social relationships, and address psychological challenges they may encounter (Muallifah, 2022).

Effective implementation strategies for mentoring programmes require careful planning, such as training for mentors and ongoing evaluation. Universities need to develop policies that support inclusion, provide adequate resources, and build partnerships with various stakeholders to ensure the success of mentoring programmes. Effective mentoring can lead to positive impacts on students with disabilities, such as improved academic performance, better social engagement, and increased confidence, independence, and social involvement. However, the success of mentoring programmes is also influenced by various factors, including the quality of the relationship between mentors and students, as well as support from the overall campus environment.

The implementation of mentoring programmes faces various challenges, such as a lack of trained human resources, insufficient understanding among academic staff regarding the needs of students with disabilities, and infrastructure that is not fully accessible. Research by Muhibbin (2020) identifies that the lack of training for mentors and lecturers is a primary barrier to the implementation of mentoring programmes. Similarly, research by Marlina (2024) highlights the importance of training for mentors to understand the specific needs of students with disabilities, and research by Prakoso and Oktora (2023) shows that mentoring not only assists in academic aspects but also encourages students with disabilities to become independent entrepreneurs after graduation.

Several higher education institutions in Indonesia have implemented mentoring programmes for students with disabilities. Universitas Brawijaya, through the Centre for Disability Studies and Services (PSLD), provides mentoring services that include academic and social support, as well as training for mentors. Universitas Sebelas Maret also offers service guidelines for students with disabilities that encompass mentoring during academic and non-academic activities, as does Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember, which provides mentoring services through its Centre for Disability Studies and Services.

Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember has implemented a mentoring programme for students with disabilities as an effort to support diversity and inclusivity within the campus environment. This programme aims to provide the necessary assistance so that students with disabilities can effectively participate in the learning process, gain equal opportunities, and face academic and social challenges in higher education. Based on a review of literature and field studies, further research is needed to describe the strategies applied in the mentoring programme, the challenges faced by the university and students, as well as the impact of this programme's implementation on the success of students with disabilities on campus.

Theoretical Framework

The implementation of support for students with disabilities in higher education is a crucial aspect of efforts to create an inclusive and equitable educational environment. Every citizen, including those with disabilities, has the same right to access quality education without discrimination (Nabila Shofana, 2022). This is realised through the provision of specialised services, such as academic and social support, which assist students with disabilities in accessing various facilities and learning needs on campus.

Support for students with disabilities extends beyond academic aspects; it also encompasses assistance in social activities and personal development. Volunteers play a vital role as facilitators, communicators, and mobilisers, helping students with disabilities access learning resources, adapt to the campus environment, and engage in various social activities and organisations (Dwija P Suryana, 2025). Through the active involvement of these supporters, students with disabilities can receive the necessary encouragement to develop social skills and independence.

Moreover, support is essential in building the confidence and courage of students with disabilities to

participate in extracurricular activities, such as internships, research, or community service. For instance, Brawijaya University provides mentoring for students with disabilities to encourage them to become independent entrepreneurs, ensuring they possess adequate human capital upon graduation (Agung Suryo Prakoso, 2023). This support is tailored to the characteristics and learning needs of each student with disabilities, thus addressing barriers and enhancing their motivation.

In the realm of higher education, the success of inclusive education is significantly influenced by the management of adequate facilities and infrastructure. However, research indicates that many universities still lack comprehensive accessibility for students with disabilities. Therefore, support serves as an effective interim solution to ensure that students with disabilities can optimally access educational services, even when physical facilities do not fully meet inclusive standards.

Support is not solely provided by educators but also involves other students as volunteers. Volunteers play a crucial role in assisting students with disabilities in both academic and non-academic activities, such as helping them access course materials, accompanying them during practical sessions, or supporting their participation in campus social events. The collaboration between supporters and students with disabilities fosters a more inclusive environment and encourages a sense of belonging among students.

The implementation of support is also evident in internship and field practice activities. Students with disabilities participating in internship programmes, such as PPL (Field Experience Practice) or MBKM (Independent Learning - Independent Campus), receive guidance from lecturers and field practitioners. This support aids students with disabilities in developing practical skills such as communication, classroom management, problem-solving, as well as collaboration and creativity, which are crucial for preparing them to enter the workforce (Herawati Arief, 2024; Herna Puji Astutik, 2024).

Overall, the implementation of support for students with disabilities in higher education represents a strategic effort to enhance accessibility, social skills, and independence among these students. Structured and sustainable support, whether from lecturers, practitioners, or volunteers, is essential to creating an inclusive educational environment that fosters academic success and personal development for students with disabilities.

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive study type. This approach was chosen as it aims to gain a deep understanding of the implementation process of guidance for students with disabilities, the challenges faced, and its impacts in the real context of the campus environment. The research was conducted at PGRI Argopuro University in Jember, from March to July 2025. The location was chosen because this university is one of the private institutions that has made efforts to provide inclusive services for students with disabilities.

The subjects of the research consist of: Students with disabilities at PGRI Argopuro University in Jember, lecturers or academic staff involved in the guidance programme, mentors (both peer mentors and special assistants), and programme managers of special services. The subject selection technique used purposive sampling, which involves selecting informants who are relevant and have direct experience in the guidance programme. Data collection techniques employed three main methods: 1) In-depth Interviews (used to obtain information from students with disabilities, mentors, and lecturers, with semi-structured interviews to allow for open data exploration); 2) Participatory Observation, where the researcher directly observes the interactions between mentors and students with disabilities during academic or social campus activities; 3) Document Study, where documents analysed include disability service guidelines, activity reports, academic data, and internal notes of the guidance programme.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three main stages: 1) Data Reduction (filtering important data based on research focus); 2) Data Presentation (data presented in the form of descriptive narratives, tables, or interview quotes); 3) Conclusion Drawing

(drawing meaning from the obtained results to answer the formulated problems). Subsequently, data validity will be ensured through source and technique triangulation, member checking (confirming interview results with informants), and audit trail documentation of the research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Description of the Implementation of the Guidance Programme for Students with Disabilities Based on interviews with students with disabilities, mentors, and lecturers, the guidance programme at PGRI Argopuro University in Jember has been implemented in the form of academic and social guidance. Academic guidance is carried out through rector policies related to learning services for students with disabilities, disability scholarship policies, and the establishment of the Centre for Disability Studies and Services. One form of student guidance implementation during learning includes assistance in understanding course material, adjusting teaching methods, peer mentoring through volunteers, affirmative policies for completing final projects, and the use of assistive technology. Meanwhile, social guidance integrates students with disabilities into campus social activities through student organisations and creative activities.

The data on students with disabilities identified by PSLD in December 2024 can be seen in the following table:

Type of Disabilit	Jumlah
Visual Impairment	60
Hearing Impairment	41
Physical Disability	135
Mental Disability	3
Total Jumlah	239

Tabel 1.1. Data on Students with Disabilities

The policy documents and infrastructure (Sarpras) supporting the implementation of guidance for students with disabilities at PGRI Argopuro University in Jember are presented in the following table:

Table 1.2. Data or	n Campus Policy Documents

Category	Policy Document
General Policy	Campus Inclusivity Policy Regulating diversity and inclusion within the campus environment
Academic Policy	Academic Guidance Policy – Learning support for students with disabilities, such as volunteers, training for students with disabilities.
Welfare Policy	Counselling Service Policy Providing psychological services for students with disabilities.
Campus Facilities Policy	Campus Accessibility Policy – Policies ensuring all campus facilities are accessible to students with disabilities.
Technology Policy	Assistive Technology Policy – Use of technology to support the learning of students with disabilities
Social and Cultural Policy	Social Awareness Enhancement Policy – Mandatory course on gender equality, disabilities, and social inclusion, programmes to enhance understanding and awareness of disability issues on campus

Table 1.3. Data on Campus Facilities and Infrastructur
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Facilities and Infrastructure	
-	Accessible Classroom: Classrooms used by students with disabilities are located on the ground floor and equipped with facilities for students with disabilities such as ramps, smart TVs, and wheelchair availability
-	Counselling Facilities: There is a counselling room that is disability-friendly, equipped with accessibility technology.
-	Library Room: Administrative services are located on the ground floor with ramps and wheelchairs; however, there is no lift, and efforts to improve accessibility are needed.
-	Some buildings do not yet have ramps; Campus 1 is for administrative activities and libraries, laboratories, student organisations, disability service units, etc., while Campus 2 is specifically for lectures.
_	Assistive Technology Devices: Tools such as screen readers and learning software for visual and hearing disabilities
_	Awareness Enhancement Activities: Activities such as seminars, workshops, disability festivals, and campaigns to increase social acceptance of students with disabilities.

The academic guidance programme is implemented by providing students with disabilities access to lecturers for additional explanations and course materials in more accessible formats, such as audio, text, or visual. Most students with disabilities report that these services help them understand lessons better; in addition, volunteers such as JBI for hearing-impaired students and sighted assistants in searching for references and editing writing for completing final projects are also available.

Social guidance includes the provision of peer mentors who act as companions in extracurricular activities or other campus events. This programme aims to enhance the social interaction of students with disabilities with other students, ultimately supporting their engagement in campus life. Challenges Faced in the Implementation of the Programme Despite the implementation of the guidance programme, several challenges have been encountered, as reflected in the results of observations and interviews, including Limited Resources, Lack of Accessible Infrastructure, and Limited Understanding among Lecturers and Staff regarding disability services.

One limitation of resources is that most mentors express that time and energy constraints hinder their ability to carry out mentoring tasks. Some student mentors report difficulties in balancing academic responsibilities with mentoring obligations. Additionally, mentors for disabilities, such as volunteers, must also understand the characteristics of each student with disabilities, particularly hearing-impaired students who require quicker sign language interpretation.

Although there is a rector policy stating that lectures are conducted on the ground floor, with ramps, administrative services, and library spaces available on the ground floor, not all campus facilities are accessible for students with disabilities, such as standard toilets for persons with disabilities that are not yet fully adequate. Prayer rooms, such as the mosque located on Campus 2, are on the second floor without a lift, and mobility access from Campus 2 to Campus 1 requires assistance and costs, particularly for students with severe disabilities. This reduces the effectiveness of the guidance programme aimed at creating an inclusive campus environment.

Some lecturers and academic staff still lack understanding of the best ways to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities in the learning process, especially lecturers outside the special education home base. Although training has been provided by PSLD UNIPAR, ongoing training is necessary, particularly on how to provide alternative services and teaching models suitable for student needs, leading many lecturers to frequently seek input and discussions from the disability study centre about how to provide learning services for students with disabilities.

Impact of the Guidance Programme on Students with Disabilities Interviews with students with disabilities indicate that the academic guidance programme directly impacts their understanding of course material. Most students report that they find it easier to understand the material after receiving guidance. Some students also noted an improvement in their Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) after participating in this programme. Positive impacts are also evident in the social relationships of

students with disabilities. The social guidance programme helps them engage more in social activities on campus. Students with disabilities feel more accepted within the campus environment, interact more with other students, and feel more confident in participating in extracurricular activities.

Discussion

The mentoring programme for students with disabilities at Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember (UNIPAR) demonstrates that academic and social support has a positive impact on the academic achievements and social engagement of disabled students. This finding aligns with research conducted by Dwija Panji Suryana et al. (2025), which states that volunteers involved in the Disability Study and Service Centre (PSLD) actively serve as mentors, communicators, and mobilisers to assist disabled students in accessing various learning and social needs on campus. This support fosters the creation of an inclusive and welcoming educational system for all, including individuals with disabilities.

The challenges faced at UNIPAR include the fact that mentoring for disabled students is often hindered by time constraints and a limited number of mentors, which affects the programme's effectiveness. Additionally, some mentors have expressed difficulties in balancing their academic responsibilities with their duties as mentors. Research at UNIPAR also reveals that, despite ongoing challenges in meeting physical accessibility requirements, efforts to strengthen non-physical accessibility—such as academic and social mentoring, disability service policies, and scholarship facilities—are significantly aiding in the establishment of an inclusive campus environment that supports the participation of disabled students in various aspects of campus life (Lailil A. Y. et al., 2025). The social mentoring provided helps disabled students to become more confident, interact with classmates, and engage actively in campus activities, thereby enhancing their social involvement.

As found in this study, some lecturers and academic staff still lack understanding of the best ways to support disabled students, which impacts the learning process. This finding is consistent with the research results of A. Zulkarnain A (2025), which indicate that even though inclusive education policies have been established, their implementation still faces various obstacles, one of which is the lack of training for educators, leading many lecturers to feel unprepared to effectively implement inclusive education in the classroom. This challenge is also reflected in other studies that state that the lack of training for educators results in minimal competence in handling students with special needs, thus affecting the effectiveness of inclusive learning (Husnul M. et al., 2023; Fauziah et al., 2023).

Although the mentoring programme is functioning well and there are other efforts provided by the campus, such as course policies and training conducted by lecturers and staff, the results of this research indicate that there are several challenges faced, including limited resources, inadequate accessible infrastructure, and a lack of knowledge among lecturers regarding inclusive education, particularly among those not based in special education. This necessitates a space for discussion. Similar challenges have also been found in research by Nabila Shofana (2022), ST Fanatuz Syamsiyah, Toni M Rizal (2023), and Intan Amalia Kartika et al. (2024), which noted that despite the implementation of inclusive education policies, physical accessibility on campus, such as ramps, guiding blocks, accessible toilets, and other supportive facilities, is still inadequate or not comprehensively available for all types of disabilities.

The findings related to the impact of mentors acting as peer companions and special mentors play a crucial role in the academic success of disabled students. This mentoring assists them in understanding difficult material, providing moral support, and facilitating their social interactions. This aligns with research by Franciscus Adi Prasetyo et al. (2024), which shows that social support from peers—including attention, accessibility assistance, social interaction, positive expression, and self-actualisation— benefits disabled students in functioning socially and enhancing their social well-being. These forms of support help disabled students feel safer and more confident in engaging in various campus activities.

Peers provide opportunities for self-expression, model good communication, and assist with adaptation in social environments. This can enhance social skills and comfort in interactions (Qadaruddin, M., Nurhakki, 2022). This research finds that peer social support is crucial for enhancing

motivation to learn and student skills, ultimately supporting active participation in campus activities. Although the contexts differ, the principle remains the same: peer support helps individuals feel safer and motivated to engage.

The findings of this study indicate that disabled students receiving academic and social mentoring tend to show improvements in both their academic performance and social relationships. This programme helps them become more involved in academic and extracurricular activities. Inclusive education not only enhances academic achievement but also aids disabled students in interacting more and building broader social networks within the campus environment.

Disabled students involved in social activities on campus indeed tend to feel more accepted and valued, which can positively impact their social skills. Participation in social activities allows disabled students to interact with peers, build networks, and gain new experiences outside the classroom. This aligns with research on social skills training and networking, which shows that participation in interactive activities such as workshops, field activities, and seminars can significantly help students adapt to new environments and enhance their social skills (Tri Susanti et al., 2024). Thus, disabled students who are active in campus social activities are likely to experience improvements in social skills, feelings of acceptance, and being valued, which ultimately supports their social integration and well-being on campus.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of the mentoring programme for disabled students at Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember has a positive impact on enhancing the academic achievements and social relationships of disabled students. However, challenges regarding limited resources, accessible infrastructure, and the knowledge of lecturers and staff require further improvement, as well as support from the government at both central and regional levels.

In line with the theory of inclusive education, which asserts that access to education for all individuals without exception is crucial, the effective implementation of mentoring programmes is key to the success of inclusive higher education in Indonesia. Therefore, there is a need for a collective effort from the entire academic community to raise awareness and capacity in supporting disabled students.

By comparing the findings of this research with previous studies, it can be concluded that while the mentoring programme has a significant positive impact, there are still several barriers that need to be addressed to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the programme. Inclusive education requires collaborative support from various parties both within the campus, including lecturers, academic staff, students, and mentors, as well as external support from government assistance.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of a mentoring program for students with disabilities at Universitas PGRI Argopuro Jember has shown positive outcomes in supporting inclusive education within the higher education environment. The mentoring program encompasses both academic and social aspects through the provision of adaptive learning services, involvement of peer volunteers, affirmative policies, and integration of students with disabilities into various campus activities. Overall, the program has had a significant impact on improving academic understanding, self-confidence, and social participation among students with disabilities. These findings align with inclusive education theory, which emphasizes the importance of collaboration among all campus stakeholders to foster an equitable, just, and disability-friendly learning environment.

However, the implementation of the program also faces several challenges, particularly the limited number of trained human resources, campus infrastructure that is not yet fully accessible, and a lack of understanding among lecturers and staff regarding inclusive education approaches. These challenges contribute to disparities in the consistent provision of inclusive services for all types of disabilities. The success of the program strongly depends on the sustainability of training for mentors and lecturers, the strengthening of institutional inclusive policies, and strong synergy between universities and external stakeholders, including the government. Continuous improvements in physical infrastructure, policy development, and human resource capacity building are essential steps toward achieving genuinely inclusive and socially just higher education.

It is recommended that the university enhance mentor training and improve both physical and digital accessibility for students with disabilities. Moreover, the research findings can be further developed into in-depth studies on the effectiveness of mentoring models in other higher education contexts.

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