Transition to Campus Life: The Perceptions of Visually Impaired Students towards Librarians' Communication Skills

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Abstract

Making the transition to campus life can be reminiscent of the season of adolescence for individuals with special needs. This article investigates the role of academic librarians' communication skills in relation to the success of the transition programme for visually impaired students (VIPs). Data were collected through interviews and focus groups. Participants consisted of five female and thirteen male students between the ages of 20 and 37. The participants considered the librarians' tone of voice, greet-

ings, and conversation as key factors for a successful transition. They also noted that the main obstacles they faced were the lack of opportunity to interact with librarians and the librarians' lack of disability awareness and knowledge.

Keywords: transition; campus life; academic library; librarians; communication skills; inclusion

1. Introduction

Education is one of the best ways to empower individuals with special needs. Education not only guarantees the financial independence of individuals with special needs (through improving their vocational skills and subsequently increasing their earnings), but also assists in enhancing their vital individual skills (self-determination, self-esteem) and social skills (Schmidt-Davis, Hayward, & Kay, 2000). A review of previous studies related to special education describes that one of the main challenges of individuals with special needs (and their families) to continue their studies is the transition to post-secondary education (Boesel, 1998; Burgstahler, 2001; Olson & Pavetti, 1996). In other words, such barriers restrict their chance of leading a prosperous and independent life, finding an appropriate career, and earning a living. Indeed, the combination of intrinsic (different types of disabilities, behavioural problems, lack of basic skills) and extrinsic (attitudinal barriers and lack of appropriate accommodations) barriers hinder special needs individuals in making a successful transition from secondary to higher education.

Accordingly, because the academic library plays a crucial role in students' learning and is the heart of a university, the librarians with a caring and supportive philosophy can be pivotal in determining the success of VIPs transition to higher education. Therefore, this paper illustrates the perceptions and experiences of visually impaired students towards librarians' communication skills and the effect it has on their sense of inclusion. It also demonstrates how the librarians' level of disability awareness, support, and communication skills can help VIPs to transition from secondary to post-secondary education successfully. The focus of this study is on the opinions and feelings of VIPs and does not include those of the librarians.

2. The Nature of Transition

In 1960, Van Gennep (1960) defined transition as a dynamic process, social shift, social expectation, and readiness. He explained that a transition is a crucial factor of change that occurs throughout life from childhood to adolescence. He proposed a threefold sequential structure to represent transition. It included pre-liminal (separation from the previous world), threshold (performance during transition), and post-liminal rites (reincorporation in their new world with new status). Also, Van Gennep remarked that at the centre of any transition is an individual who is shifting from personhood to becoming a social being (individuals are the centre of rites of passage).

Within a person's lifetime, they will experience at least four major systematic transitions which are home-to-elementary school, elementary school to junior high school, junior high school to high school, and finally high school to college or work (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm, & Splittgerber, 2000). Specifically, transition reminds us of the season of adolescences in which students (both disabled and non-disabled) should leave their residential school to start their new life in a new community (Giarelli, Ruttenberg, & Segal, 2013). Accordingly, the scholars suggested the "transition-focused education" to assist students in achieving their defined goals (Kohler & Field, 2003). Indeed, postsecondary education provides a suitable platform for students, especially with special needs, to experience and equip themselves with proper skills (individuals, social, and work) and values to shape their aspirations for the future (Rusch, Hughes, Agran, Martin, & Johnson, 2009). Based on the findings of the investigation, there is a positive relationship between the postsecondary education and employment outcomes for students with special needs (Fabian, 2007; Sitlington, Neubert, & Clark, 2006). According to the statistics, the employment rate for individuals with special needs and a bachelor's degree or college education is 53% and 43% respectively, whereas it is only 34% for students who possess a high school diploma (Fogg, Harrington, & McMahon, 2010). This stark difference in employment rate indicates the importance of postsecondary education on the quality of life and future employment opportunities of special needs students (Cheatham, Smith, Elliot, & Friedline, 2013).

Interestingly, a review of published studies shows that the majority of studies mainly concentrated on "care services transition." However, recently scholars have investigated other aspects of transition, such as the post-secondary

education system even for individuals without disabilities (Stewart et al., 2010). According to the literature, most scholars considered the school transition as an interruption in the continuity of individuals' lives, especially individuals with special needs. It exposes them to organizational (changes in school size, departmentalization streaming, types of ability and competition, and teachers expectations), and social-emotional discontinuities (change in school diversity and heterogeneity, relationship with peers and teachers, sense of belonging, acceptance, and valued) (Anderson et al., 2000; Fombonne, 2003; Mizelle & Mullins, 1997; Schumaker, 1998; Wells, 1996). Moreover, an individual's personal characteristics, gender, ethnicity, and family socio-economic status also play a crucial role in their transition to post-secondary education (Caton & Kagan, 2007; Chambers, Hughes, & Carter, 2004; Giarelli et al., 2013; Powers et al., 2007; Stewart et al., 2010). In reality, the combination of intrinsic (different type of disabilities, behavioural problems, lack of necessary skills, being home bounded, lack of motivation to complete tasks, adapting to the environment, and self-image which are under their control) and extrinsic (attitudinal barriers, lack of appropriate accommodations, assignment difficulties, being welcomed, respected, and valued by others which are not under their control) barriers hamper individuals with special needs to have a successful transition (Burgstahler, 2001; Giarelli et al., 2013; Olson & Pavetti, 1996; Roderick, 1993). Accordingly, it can be concluded that the transition for students with special needs is a mixture of their physical, sensory, cognitive, and communication limitations concerning the educational system, policies, services, staff, and unsupportive peers (Stewart et al., 2010). In this respect, Stewart and his colleagues (2001) presented stories from special needs students and their parents that likened the transition to adulthood as being similar to the feeling of "being dropped off a cliff."

2.1. Ecological Theory and Library Science

Over time, scholars have developed different types of transitional programme activities, and the content is designed for different education levels and based on the specific needs of students with special needs. One of the most popular theories was developed in 1970 by Urie Bronfenbrenner who used the ecological systems theory to understand the interactions between ever-changing individuals and their ever-changing environment. He described four layers of the ecological theory (Figure 1), which are as follows. First, a microsystem (refers to individuals' interactions with family, neighbourhood, schools,
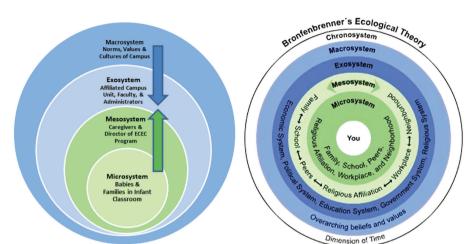
Fig. 1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (left part from McMullen and Lash, 2012; right part from Small, Raghavan, and Pawson, 2013).

peers, teachers, librarians), second, a mesosystem (direct or indirect relations between different microsystems). Third, an exosystem (specific areas of social life in which individuals do not directly participate, but nonetheless they impact their lives via interconnections with microsystems, such as dominant beliefs that shape the culture of setting such as attitudes, and awareness). Finally, the macrosystem (refers to the dominant beliefs and the link with the exosystem, such as the influence of regulations or policies on individuals' economic or social activities). Indeed, the Bronfenbrenner theory mainly stresses the person-context interrelatedness (Tudge, Gray, & Hogan, 1997) and explores the connection between various aspects of individuals (such as gender) and their surrounding context (social, communicational, cultural aspect) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Previous studies highlighted that the majority of scholars found Bronfenbrenner's framework instrumental in the context of education, primarily to determine the experiences of individuals with special needs and the role of context in their life (Dunlop & Fabian, 2007; Tudge & Hogan, 2005). For example, McIntyre, Eckert, Fiese, DiGennaro Reed, & Wildenger (2010) classified teachers' understanding of the education institution's mission at the microsystem level, teaching practices and learning expectation at the mesosystem level, curriculum and policy standards at the exosystem level, and influence of education system and content on society at the macrosystem level.

Accordingly, based on the similarities that exist between library science and education, the academic librarians' degree of disability awareness and communication skills can be classified in the microsystem level. Their role involves increasing disability awareness among academic society, colleagues and peers in the mesosystem level, their attitudes towards special needs users and their requirements, the allocation of a sufficient budget for optimising library infrastructure, and implementing disabled-friendly policies at the exosystem level. Finally, considering the influence of the library education system on society at the macrosystem level. However, a brief review of LIS literature shows an obvious lack of transitional programmes in the context of the academic library and a lack of investigations regarding the role of academic librarians in the success of transition programmes. In other words, the key role of academic libraries and librarians in the success of transition programmes has been overlooked, which has caused students with special needs to encounter various difficulties like physical and attitudinal barriers (Barth, 2006; Bayat Bodaghi & Zainab, 2013a; Forrest, 2006; Leong & Higgins, 2002; Nandjui et al., 2008). Indeed, such barriers are mainly rooted in library stakeholders' and librarians' lack of disability awareness (Pinder, 2005; Scheimann, 1994; Todaro, 2005) which consequently hinders the library community in establishing disabled-friendly policies, allocating appropriate funding for optimizing library physical environment, and providing disabled friendly sources, services, and facilities.

Similarly, a glimpse at Malaysian LIS literature indicated that Malaysian students with special needs and who are home-bounded (which indirectly effects on their self-esteem and self-determination) encounter more difficulties in fulfilling their educational needs in the context of academic libraries (Abrizah & Ruslina, 2010; Bayat Bodaghi & Zainab, 2013b; Bayat Bodaghi, Zainab, & Abdullah, 2014; Devatason & Karim, 1996; Pak, 2007; Wang, 1994). Accordingly, transitional programmes instead of being considered as an auxiliary activity should be acknowledged as an essential foundation for educational programmes. This foundation would act as a motivational factor for special needs students by supporting their psychological well-being and reducing the chance of them withdrawing from their studies.

Therefore, due to the importance of the topic of transition, this study explores the role of academic librarians' degree of support and communication skills, and how this relates to the success of transition programmes by creating a sense of welcome, acceptance, value, respect, or in brief, inclusion.

3. Method and Sampling

This case study uses a qualitative approach. Participants were VIPs who had registered with the library at a research university in Malaysia. The university is the oldest in Malaysia and was chosen because the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia recommends it as a suitable institution for special needs students. The library of the university boasts the most experience of providing specialised services, especially to VIPs. Furthermore, according to study participants, the university was their first choice to pursue their tertiary education. They also stated that the university is the preferred destination for visually impaired students in Malaysia.

This paper is based on responses from 18 VIPs (six female and twelve male) who ranged from 20 to 37 years old. The participants were from different fields of study, and they all volunteered to participate in this study. Nine were undergraduates (Bachelor level), and nine were postgraduate students. Five of the VIPs have low vision but fit into the category of visually impaired as they have between fifteen to twenty per cent vision. Using a list provided by the library, the participants were approached and the objectives of the research were explained to them, then their email addresses and phone numbers were requested. All of the visually impaired students possessed screen reader software, such as Jaws or Window eye, which enabled them to use computers and the Internet. Information sheets were emailed that described the aim of the research, the expectations during the interviews, and how the collected information would be managed. The contents of the consent form were read to each participant, and they required to sign a consent form before the interview. Participants were assured that their anonymity would be preserved in the research findings.

Data was collected via semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions held in the VIPs' library carrels, their special laboratory in the library, their dormitories at a hall of residence, and a special laboratory in their residence dormitory. All interviews and focus group sessions were recorded with a digital audio recorder and lasted for between 45 and 60 minutes. The researchers divided the participants into four focus groups. Each focus group discussion lasted approximately two hours. The interview and focus group questions mostly concentrated on the library sources, services, facilities (which had been provided for VIPs) besides librarians' degree of disability awareness and communication skills (which foster their transition to campus life). For example "What is the first thing that comes to your mind when

thinking about the library?," and "If you encountered any difficulties in the library which is the first person you would contact?," "How do librarians make them feel like they have a place in the library?," "Would you please describe any situation in which you feel welcomed to the library," and "If you could change something in the library what would it be?."

In the beginning, the VIPs were shy and formal. Some showed limited interest because they were uncomfortable providing details of their experiences. As the interviews progressed, the VIPs became more comfortable, especially when they learned that we had met and become familiar with their friends. Because the first researcher is Iranian, participants were curious to know why she had chosen this topic. They asked whether she had special reasons and whether she or any member of her family had a disability. The participants also asked about the circumstances of the visually impaired who live in Iran, about barriers that Iranian visually impaired persons face in the course of their daily lives, and about their educational and employment status. These discussions provided a good foundation for the researchers and participants to share knowledge and experiences.

Three main themes emerged with regards to VIPs' perceptions and descriptions about librarians' communication skills which foster the students' transition, sense of comfort and feelings of being welcomed, valued, respected, supported, and included. Member checking and peer review were undertaken to ensure the trustworthiness of data. The following section describes the four main themes that were extracted from VIPs' perceptions, experiences and feelings toward librarians and the library. In this study, the names of all participants have been changed to maintain anonymity. The study of the librarians themselves is not within the scope of this study.

4. Findings

4.1. Librarians' Tone of the Voice

The communication process between people involves both verbal and non-verbal communication channels. The non-verbal channels consist of facial expressions and tone of voice; both of which can reflect the communicators' feelings, emotions, and attitudes. Although visually impaired persons cannot see the facial expression of a person with whom they are communicating, they can perceive an individual's expression from the tone of his or her

voice (Laplante & Ambady, 2003). Boas, Ferreira, and Viola (2012) pointed out that in a communication process, the tone of the voice of an individual can convey a great deal of information about the individual's attitudes, emotions and opinions. They pointed out that many of the visually impaired teachers are unaware of the power of their voice and do not know the extent to which their voice influences their professional performance. The visually impaired participants in this study indicated that they could gauge the librarians' degree of willingness to help them based on the tone of the voice.

> " … The ideal library for the visually impaired during transition is a place I guess, which has friendly librarians. When you talk to the librarians, they speak to you softly. You know, because we are blind we can listen, listen to your voice, so we can recognise and define whether someone is friendly or not. We recognise their expressions through the tone of their voice, from the way they talk to us when we ask a question. For example, we ask a question about keys. I forgot to bring my keys, or I return the books quite late, and I want to borrow more books, so from the librarians' tone of voice or words, which they use we can guess their reaction. When librarians answer our questions with one or two words such as Yes, No, Uhmm, I don't know, it does not sound friendly to us!. So, through their tone of voice, the way they talk, how willing they are to help and their reactions to our request for help, we can gauge the level of their friendliness" (Hadi, 22 years old)

> "… For me, a librarian's tone of voice is Ok, but the majority of my visually impaired friends are sensitive. So maybe if the librarian speaks a little loud, the visually impaired student thinks that he is shouting. I think librarians should learn how to talk nicely and in a friendly manner to visually impaired students" (Fahimeh, 23 years old)

> "Ok! Let's be frank! Yes, there are some librarians who I think talk nicely in a friendly manner- their voice creates in you such a nice feeling! Having good communication with librarians is very important for us because it helps us feel comfortable to ask for their assistance. Good communication makes the librarians our friend!" (Yacob, 37 years old)

4.2. Librarians' Greetings and Conversation

Communication also creates first impressions about a person, event or incidents (Hamilton & Creel, 2011). The problem with first impressions is that

sometimes people fail to change their previous impression even after under-going new experiences during subsequent communication. Such feelings cause people to start making assumptions based on their perception of other people. Telling other people about such impressions or feelings can perpetu-ate either positive or negative attitudes upon the receiver. In this study, librar-ians' greetings are shown to affect the visually impaired users' perceptions and assumptions of librarians' friendliness. When the librarians greet stu-dents, they create a welcoming atmosphere and evoke positive experiences as a result of making the VIPs feel comfortable or at ease. In this situation, the VIPs would have no hesitation in requesting help when they encounter some difficulties in the library. Johnson, Medina, and Herrera (2001) explained that library users expect the librarians to be friendly, smiling, and interacting actively with users. Indeed, when the librarians are friendly, the users with special needs felt more at ease and welcome in the library.

"To have an ideal library, we need friendly librarians who would greet us with a 'hi' or 'salaam' [peace]. Sometimes they come to our carrels and ask us how we are, what are we doing? We as visually impaired students don't always need help; we need to be talked to though. Once we feel more comfortable with the librarians, we could talk to them, and we easily ask them for help if there was any problem" (Fahimeh, 23 years old)

"I feel that the librarians respected me because they make friendly conversations with me. This makes it easier for me to request for more help! I mean when I ask for some help, the librarians are willing to help without any umm or resentful questions!... when the librarians greet me, for example, they would ask me how I am and that they have not seen me for a long time. This shows (to me) that the librarians are familiar in handling visually impaired students" (Yacob, 37 years old)

"Some of the librarians are friendly. I mean when they see me in the library, they would greet me both inside and outside the library. Sometimes the librar-ians bring us some food, maybe during the festival celebration or on Hari Raya they bring us something to eat" (Amir, 31 years old)

"Imagine a situation where you have not come to the library for a long time, and the librarians would enquire from our peers posing questions such as why this person doesn't come to the library? Has he graduated? Or imagine the moment you have finished your studies in UM and suddenly encounter a problem and

come to the library, and the librarian would pay attention to you!" (Louvee, 28 years old)

The participants of the study also highlighted the crucial role of librarians' willingness to converse with them. They expressed their feeling towards the librarians who talk to them, who they perceive as being friendly, who motivates them to use the library.

"… I like the librarians to be concerned about me. For example, if I ask for their help, the only thing I expect from them is to at the very least give me a smiling face! That is the first expression which I like to see and the second one is to help me whole-heartedly" (Nasir, 21 years old)

"… I like when I go to the library and talk to the librarians, they would also talk to me in a pleasant manner… I can say that librarians on the first floor are quite good. When I went there, they would talk to me, asking me how I am? And what do I want? Have I come to pay fees? They are talkative! But the librarians at the counter was less talkative! I believe the librarians at the counter have to communicate with all users; maybe they think their job is only scanning the books [for charging/discharging books"] (Mostafa, 24 years old)

"…librarians can show that they accepted us by improving the quality of their communication with us. They could be more talkative and friendly! They should first learn how to communicate with visually impaired students. Secondly, they should know how to motivate the visually impaired to come to the library…. I am not comfortable asking the librarians to help me. As I mentioned before, the librarians always seem to be very busy and cannot spend time with me. I think librarians should be more talkative and friendly! I am not afraid of the librarians, but I think librarians are afraid of us (she laughs)!" (Laila, 23 years old)

4.3. Lack of Opportunity to Interact with Librarians

Lack of opportunity for social interaction is one of the barriers that students with special needs face. Since 1980, social interaction has been considered as one of the foundations for the movement towards inclusive education. The social contact that students with special needs experience through the inclusion initiatives provides them with the support to maintain their rights as users in the library environment. In this study, the VIPs indicated that

interacting with librarians is very important for them. They believe that close relationships with librarians improve their social skills.

> *"… I don't have any negative attitude towards the librarians; I would like them to interact with us, to see us, to talk with us, only this! Active interactions help make us feel more comfortable to ask for their help"* (Farhad, 22 years old)

> *"I hope the librarians come to talk to me. That way, maybe I can approach them to have conversations, and our conversations are not limited to library services only but could talk about other things so that our relationships and understanding of each other improve. I hope the librarians would approach me, but maybe they are afraid to come to talk to us because they don't know how to talk or discuss with us"* (Amir, 31 years old)

> *"The librarian should learn how to interact with us as it will help us feel more comfortable to ask help from. Good interactions make us closer to them and make it easy for us to request for help. I prefer a friendly librarian. For example, for me, a friendly person is a person who makes jokes"* (Atifah, 22 years old)

> *" … Umm, friendly librarians are those who know how to interact and communicate with students who are visually impaired, who consider our sensitivity, our feelings and talk to us in a friendly way!"* (Sedigeh, 29 years old)

The participants in the research believed that the degree of a librarians' communication and the quality of their interaction could be related to their degree of awareness about people with special needs and the appropriate skills of communicating with them.

> *"… Many of the librarians are not familiar with visually impaired users, maybe because of their lack of knowledge or they are too busy to be in contact with visually impaired users. Some of them don't have any interaction with the visually impaired. Librarians should learn to listen to the visually impaired. Not only listen but also fulfil their request (he laughs). Librarians should interact, should have good interaction with visually impaired users in the library"* Yacob, 37 years old)

> *"Some of the librarians are very helpful and speak in a friendly manner, but some of them don't. It is human behaviour. Friendly to me means they listen to us if*

we have any request or needs. I never nag about such a thing. I keep it to myself, never mind, I don't like to tell them about such things" (Sedigeh, 29 years old)

In situations where the visually impaired people perceive the librarians as not interacting with them, this would result in avoidance behaviour. The visually impaired students then avoid interacting with the librarians and exclude themselves from the library activities.

"I think visually impaired students should try to keep in touch with librarians to make them aware what interaction means to the visually impaired. We are sensitive people and librarians should respect us and talk to us properly" (Rahman, 22 years old)

"…. I don't have any reason to contact the librarians or to interact with them to help me, I prefer to talk with my senior. I mean I feel more comfortable to talk and ask her [senior] to help me. If I couldn't solve my problem by myself, I'll ask my friends, and if they cannot, the last option is the librarians" (Ahdiyeh, 22 years old)

Table 1 gives a summary of student perceptions and feelings towards the librarians' communication skills and how they can affect their feelings of being included.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This article highlights the challenges of VIPs during their transition to campus life in the context of an academic library in Malaysia. In this case study, VIPs noted that the difficulties they face are related to the librarians' tone of voice, greeting, conversational style, and the lack of opportunity for interaction. Based on these factors, they can gauge the librarian's willingness or unwillingness to help them. These factors also determine whether the VIPs feel comfortable enough to request help from librarians. In other words, negative experiences make it difficult to feel welcome, accepted, valued and respected in the library. The participants of the study explained that the frequency and quality of their interactions with the librarians are important to them. They believed that communication allows them to feel comfortable and more willing to request help. The findings show that although the VIPs felt that the librarians treated them well, they wanted more support to feel respected

Table 1: Themes Emerging from Attitudes towards Communication with Librarians.

Emerging themes	Situations	Types of feelings	Triggers/barriers to sense of belonging
Librarians' tone of voice	• Communicate in a soft tone of voice • Reply with smiling faces • Answer questions using just one or two words • Staff willing to help • Talk loudly • Good communication	• Happy and have a sense of belonging • Feel welcomed • Touched by friendliness • Nice and warm feeling • Feel comfortable • Feel embarrassed • Feel angry • Feel afraid	• Sense of belonging • Positive attitude towards librarians • Feel being accepted/respected • Sense of not being valued • A negative attitude toward librarians
Librarians' greetings and Conversation	• Staff greetings • Salutations upon meeting (Hi/Salam) • Friendly conversation • Staff willingness to help • Staff bring gifts during festivities • Librarians who talk in a pleasant manner • Talkative librarians • Quality conversation with librarians • Busy librarians • Staff do not spend time with the disabled	• Feel welcomed • Feel comfortable • Respected by librarians • Feel easier to ask for help • Cared for or thought of by staff who are aware of those with disabilities • Feel welcomed • Feel good • Feel accepted • Feel uncomfortable	• Sense of being included/considered • Sense of being respected/valued • Sense of being accepted/being important • Positive attitude towards librarians • Positive attitude towards librarians • Sense of being included/considered • Sense of being accepted/important • Negative attitude towards librarians
Lack of opportunity to interact with librarians	• Conversation with staff about other things not only library services • Librarians who make jokes • Librarians who consider their sensitivity • Listen to the library user's request • The reluctance of librarians to interact/converse	• Feel included • Feel comfortable in asking for help • Helping staff to understand • Feel close enough to librarians to ask for help • Feel the staff are friendly • Perceive librarians to be busy or people who are unaware of disabled users • Feel librarians are afraid of them	• Positive attitude towards librarians • Sense of being included • Sense of being valued/important • Sense of being accepted • Sense of being considered • Negative attitude towards librarians • Sense of being excluded • Sense of not being accepted

and to promote a sense of inclusion in the library. In reality, such perceptions towards librarians cause the VIPs to only approach the librarians for help as a last resort or when they cannot find their friends or others to help them. The participants of the study perceived that the fundamental problem is the lack of awareness amongst the front-line librarians on how to assist VIPs. Consequently, over time such feelings and perceptions towards librarians cause VIPs to exclude themselves voluntarily from the mainstream library (avoiding interaction with the librarians and attending in library activities), which is precisely the opposite of the transitional programme objectives. This result supports the findings of previous investigations (Peters, 2007; Oxoby, 2009; Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2009).

It should be kept in mind that the real meaning of inclusion in the success of transition programmes is more than physical integration and includes providing a supportive system, a welcoming culture, and an accepting atmosphere for individuals with special needs to connect with other members of the community and prevent them from excluding themselves from the mainstream community (Burchardt, Le Grand, & Piachaud, 1999; Oxoby, 2009; Peters, 2007; Symeonidou & Phtiaka, 2009). In this respect, Charles (2005) emphasised the role of front-line librarians in creating a friendly atmosphere for communicating with users with special needs. He pointed out that although front-line librarians do not have the power to formulate policy, they can still help by creating a positive impression of the library and thus motivating users with special needs to use the library more frequently. Also, according to Woo (2005), one of the main criteria in evaluating library service quality from the users' perspective is the librarians' behaviour, such as friendliness, politeness in communication, and willingness to assist users. Woo believes adherence to these attributes helps to make the users feel secure and safe. Communication is a fundamental aspect of human life through which people exchange information, thoughts, beliefs and emotions to integrate with others in the community (Sheafor & Horejsi, 2012). However, librarians are often found to have little knowledge of how to communicate with or assist students with special needs (Broady-Preston, Felice, & Marshall, 2006) which is perceived as a barrier by the library users (Holmes, 2008). To support this, Duckett (2004) remarked the origin of such a problem is related to the different perspectives among librarians and library users. Indeed, Duckett declared that, from the library users' viewpoint, it is more important for librarians to be knowledgeable, friendly and polite than it is for them to possess skills related to the transfer of information. Whereas from the viewpoint of the librarians, the information

transfer is more important rather than the quality of their relationships with library users.

Most importantly, the social interactions, especially during the transition, not only have a direct effect on aspects of the psychological well-being of students like self-esteem and self-determination, but also on their well-being in their future relationships, work, and health (Leary & Baumeister, 2000; Nota, Soresi, Ferrari, & Wehmeyer, 2011; Swann, Chang-Schneider, & McClarty, 2007). Social experiences and feedback from others in the academic environment play a significant role in determining the self-perception of students with special needs (Cole, Maxwell, & Martin, 1997; Graham & Juvonen, 1998; Hintsanen et al., 2012). The outcome of positive self-perception would be fewer behavioural problems, better academic adjustment, academic achievement, and social competence. All of which are vital for a successful transitional process (Mestre, Gracia, Frias, & Llorca, 1992; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992). Also, individuals can determine their value through interaction with other members of the community. This interaction can directly affect their sense of self-worth, especially during adolescence (Ciarrochi, Heaven, & Davies, 2007; Leary & Baumeister, 2000; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995). Therefore, a lack of strong relationships with their desired groups will affect their self-esteem, self-perception, self-value, self-determination and consequently their psychological adjustment, persistence to accomplish tasks, inclusion, and anxiety (Moussavi et al., 2007; Nolan, Flynn, & Graber, 2003; Sowislo & Orth, 2013; Stice, Ragan, & Randall, 2004; Wahl, Bergland, & Loyland, 2010).

As discussed earlier, and based on Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998), due to bidirectional interaction existing between ever-changing individuals and their immediate changing environment, both factor categories should be considered in developing an appropriate transitional programme (Early, Pianta, & Cox, 1999). In other words, to develop an efficient campus life transition programme that promotes new abilities for special needs students so that they accept new responsibilities and undertake a more diverse range of activities, education stakeholders need to consider all layers and aspects of the academic context within the transition, and the activities should be individual-centred (Giarelli et al., 2013). McClelland and his colleagues (2007) noted that previous research overlooked the existence of interaction between various factors within the context (cultural, social, and institutional), which indicates that they failed to illustrate a holistic view of the transition of special needs students to campus life (King, Baldwin, Currie, & Evans, 2005).

Furthermore, there is a direct relationship between positive perceptions of the social climate (less strict, more supportive librarians, friendly and less badly behaving peers) and fewer adjustment difficulties (Pinchover & Attar-Schwartz, 2014). Therefore, equipping all members of the university, such as librarians, lecturers, even non-disabled peers, with sufficient disability knowledge to guide students with special needs through transitional programmes seems vital. The point is that although such a positive atmosphere cannot help the students overcome all their difficulties, it can at least make some obstacles more manageable and make the overall transition process more comfortable.

Due to the vital role of the library and librarians in assisting students with special needs to achieve their educational goals, library stakeholders should develop some librarian/peer/mentor programmes for junior students with special needs. Aside from helping them form relationships with their seniors with special needs, it also provides them with opportunities to expand their networks with non-disabled peers, volunteer readers, lecturers, and other faculty members. Furthermore, LIS stakeholders should equip their future educators with the essential transferable attributes, such as communication skills, specifically in university libraries, to motivate students with special needs to achieve their educational goals (Miller & Wallis, 2011). Also, LIS stakeholders should equip librarians with communication skills based on their context characteristics (social, cultural, ecological, and economic), and also promote future LIS educators' awareness of special needs. In this respect, the participants of the study suggested developing courses for LIS educators in combination with the promotion or specific job roles for librarians who are familiar with the actual needs of individuals with special needs.

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