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BEING A FIRST-CLASS HONOUR STUDENT WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH: AN INTRINSIC CASE STUDY ON MR.V.

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Abstract
The study was an intrinsic case study on Mr V's successful learning journey at Universiti Malaysia Sabah. Specifically, the study aimed to understand how the university supports students with disabilities and guides them towards becoming honourable students. The researcher implemented an intrinsic case study. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed thematically. As a baseline for this research, three main themes were identified in Mr V's successful learning journey at UMS. The three categories are T1: Campus Climate, T2: Academic Challenges, and T3: Educational Support System. All themes are positively preferred in discussion sessions. The investigation is significant as it captures the experience of a well-performing student with visual impairment before implementing the Zero Reject Policy. It could be a guideline for accommodating students with visual impairments outside formal procedures.

Keywords: *Visual Impairment, Visual Disability, Visually Disabled, Inclusive Education, Experience, Reasonable Accommodation, Qualitative, Case Study.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is not a privilege, but a right for all, including persons with visual impairments [39]. Similarly, Malaysia has implemented the Zero Reject Policy (ZRP), which features several aspects. It includes compulsory admission to government schools, offering multiple learning pathways, mandating the provision of support services, and flexible learning approaches [4, 26]. Even before the implementation of such a policy, there have been instances where students with disabilities were accepted into higher education. For example, in 2010, there were 1,115 students with disabilities enrolled in higher education [22].

Theoretically, the success of an educational institution is defined by its ability to recognise students' rights to education and provide reasonable accommodations and procedures that allow everyone to participate in any programs they wish to join [29]. However, most disabled students are segregated and more likely to be denied entry into higher education [40]. Several factors, including social stigma, lack of awareness and acceptance, and accessibility, have been well-documented in numerous studies. For example, in the studies by Zainab and her team [41], Aizan and her team [2], Lopez-Gavira and her team [20], and Hewett and her team [11]. While discussing the issues and challenges of inclusive education is essential, it is equally important to emphasise the informal practices implemented by educational institutions to support students with disabilities in their academics.

Consequently, this investigation explores the experience of a first-class honours student with visual impairment at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS). Specifically, it aimed to understand students' learning challenges and how significant parties at UMS assist such students with visual impairment. This study could also serve as a guide for educational institutions that have not previously accepted students with visual impairment but are planning to enrol them. It also outlines practices that may be

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beneficial for supporting students with visual impairment in university settings beyond formal guidelines.

2. METHODOLOGY

a. Study Design

This study used the intrinsic case study design proposed by Stake [33], which is suitable when a particular case holds a specific interest [33, 37]. The study aims to understand the experiences of students with disabilities who graduated with first-class honours from the university. Examining the insight shared by the participants in this study can yield strategies to increase the rate of students with disabilities pursuing their studies in higher institutions. A qualitative case study was conducted to accomplish the objectives of this study. It emphasises the experiences of a specific population of students with disabilities who graduated with first-class honours from UMS.

b. Participant

The purposive sampling technique was used to identify students and gather information. The qualitative participant for this case study is a first-class honours student with a disability. One student with a visual impairment disability graduated with first-class honours from UMS. In this study, Mr V was coded as such. Mr V was recruited to participate in this investigation using the purposeful maximal sampling technique [8] or maximum variation sampling [24, 25]. As an overview of Mr V's background, he began his studies at UMS when he was 20 years old. Mr V is a student with visual impairment who enrolled at UMS in 2013 and graduated in 2016 with first-class honours. His major was Child and Family Psychology, before the introduction of the Zero Reject Policy [4]. The researchers considered Mr V a unique and fascinating subject for study, particularly in the context of disability. During this study, Mr. V was 32 years old. He shared details about his VI. He has congenital glaucoma, which has resulted in blindness in his right eye and limited vision of 2/60 in his left eye, and a constricted visual field accompanies it. Throughout his educational journey, he has relied on visual aids such as an electronic magnifier to read printed materials. Additionally, he uses a laptop with screen-reading software called Non-Visual Desktop Access (NVDA) to assist with his studies.

c. Producers

The producers in this study conducted the following steps. In the first step, researchers contacted Mr V through phone calls and messaging platforms (such as WhatsApp and email) to request his permission to participate in the study. After that, the researchers and Mr V set an appointment time for an interview session. The interview was recorded and transcribed. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, which took approximately three hours and 30 minutes. Interviews were performed online, using Microsoft Teams. The interview was conducted in English. Mr V's verbatim transcript was transcribed in Microsoft Word. Data were analysed using the Thematic Analysis Approach [5]. The study findings were validated through investigator triangulation and member checking [33, 34].

d. Data Collection

The researchers gathered data in several ways. The process involved keen observation, accurate research, and good communication skills. Qualitative research is open-ended, but it must be somewhat semi-structured to ensure alignment of the data with the problem under study [32].

e. Data Analysis

The data were analysed using thematic analysis [5]. The following table summarises the different themes identified through interview analysis. Table 1 shows the final themes and subthemes from the interview questions.

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Table 1
Final Themes and Subthemes of the Case Study about Mr V's Learning Journey as A First-Class Honours Student At UMS

Themes	Subthemes
a. Campus Climate	• General experience
b. Academic Challenges	• Course-specific challenges
	• Unsuitable teaching method.
	• Inaccessible course materials.
	• Unsuitable assessment.
c. Educational Support	• Mentorship
	• Encouragement
	• Administer the Adjustment of Examination

3. RESULTS

This section will present Mr. V's journey at UMS, and the themes are as follows.

(a) Theme 1: Campus Climate

The 'Campus Climate' theme refers to the shared feelings and attitudes towards college and university environments [18]. Various facets of the campus environment can influence these perceptions. The campus climate reflects institutional policies and histories that shape the lives of its members [12, 13, 31], which can promote inclusion and equity for students, faculty, and staff or can further marginalise underrepresented groups. The theme of campus climate contained one subtheme: general experience.

- ***General Experience***

Mr V's general experience was ambivalent regarding aspects of campus climate, particularly with regard to inclusivity and support for students with visual disabilities. Mr V was first questioned about his experience studying at the university. His experience found UMS to be somewhat inaccessible for students with visual disabilities. In 2013, Mr V's academic experience as an undergraduate student started. Mr. V had low expectations regarding the accessibility of UMS for students with visual impairments due to its limited support. At that time, Mr. V viewed the University of Malaya (UM) as the only institution with a strong reputation for supporting students who are visually impaired. He acknowledged that the University of Science Malaysia (USM) began admitting students with visual impairment, but he felt that their experience in doing so was brief. Mr. V considers UM superior in accommodating and supporting students with visual impairments compared to UMS and USM. The excerpt below highlights Mr. V's experience and perspective on the accessibility of higher education for visually impaired students in Malaysia.

> *"Honestly, I know UMS is not very accessible. From what I knew back then, the only university in Malaysia that provides a good support system and is experienced in handling students with visual disabilities is UM. They have been handling students like me for many years. At that time, the USM also*

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> *started taking in students with a visual disability, but UM is still the best, I guess".*

Although Mr. V believed that UM was better equipped to support students with visual impairments due to its extensive experience, he remained open-minded about his academic opportunities. Despite his initial doubts about UMS's accessibility for students with visual impairments, he gave it a chance. His decision was influenced by a positive interaction with the program coordinator at UMS, who likely provided encouragement and guidance. It demonstrates Mr V's willingness to explore options and take risks to pursue his study. Mr V said,

> *"… During my first semester of Year 1, I attempted to appeal for a transfer to UM or USM. I went to see my program coordinator. Back then, it was lecturer DS. I explained my issues and concerns to her. She acknowledged my concerns, but instead of saying I should transfer, she told me, "Why didn't you try first? Try to go through your studies with us. Moreover, we are here to assist you. "If you need anything, please let us know, and we will do our best to accommodate you."*
>
> *"… That gives me hope."*

(b) Theme 2: Academic Challenges

Academic challenges are obstacles that students face in their educational journey. These hurdles can hinder performance and growth, leading to frustration and stress. Based on Mr. V's experience, he has experienced several challenges throughout his journey at UMS. Being a first-class honours student is not an easy road. This study identified academic challenges into three subthemes: course-specific issues, unsuitable teaching methods, inaccessible course materials, and unsuitable assessments.

- ***Course-specific***

Regarding course-specific challenges, Mr. V struggled greatly in Social Statistics and Data Analysis, which he took during his second year at UMS. According to Mr V, both courses involved numerous visual demonstrations, and it was challenging for him to comprehend the material being taught during lectures.

> *"As for data analysis … I would say it was challenging for the same reason. In data analysis, instead of calculating things manually, we use SPSS. Back then, I believed it was SPSS version 20 or 21. … So, the problem was when the lecturer was teaching us and asked us to go to the variable view to key in the variables. Then, go to the data view to key in our raw data. Then, click 'Analyse', click here, and click there. I do not know what he was talking about."*

Further compounding the problem is that manual calculations are required in Social Statistics. At the same time, data analysis involved using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which was not readily available to him at the time. His version of SPSS does not support screen-reading software, and high contrast mode is not supported.

> *"… There are a few. However. Honestly, my biggest challenge is dealing with some of the courses, which require a lot of visual aids. First, it was Social Statistics. The second was data analysis. Social statistics is challenging, as I cannot follow what is being taught…"*

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> *"… You see, social statistics require you to calculate things manually. So, it was very difficult…"*

- ***Unsuitable teaching method***

When Mr V was asked about academic challenges, he said he struggled to understand the course content and the lecturer's teaching method. During that course, the lecturer displayed notes on the screen. This study found that unsuitable teaching methods for students with visual impairment hindered their learning because the lecturer relied heavily on visual materials, such as notes displayed in class. It was hard for students with visual impairment to understand the lesson. As a result, the student struggled to comprehend the content, particularly complex topics such as formulas and calculations. Mr V said,

> *"… This was back in the first semester of my second year. The lecturer displayed notes in front of the class. When he explained the formulas and calculations, I did not understand. I could not see what was in front of me. Even during tutorials, I was sitting there like a log. You see, social statistics require you to calculate things manually. So, it was very difficult."*

- ***Inaccessible course materials.***

Mr. V also reported that not all course materials are accessible. The accessibility of the materials often depends on the format of the documents presented to him. He clarified that he still possesses some vision. It allows him to read printed materials using his electronic magnifier. However, his reading speed is severely compromised due to his limited vision and constricted visual field. Besides his slow reading speed, he struggled with graphical materials, as he was unable to interpret those images due to his limited vision.

> *"…it depends. Some are accessible, and some are not. To make things clear, I have. I am partially blind. However, even though I have some vision left, it is not good enough. I read printed materials using my electronic magnifier. However, my reading speed is slow. So, if possible, I try to avoid printed materials as much as possible."*

Mr V further argued that, although some materials appeared in written format, they had been scanned, and his screen-reading software was unable to read them. While it is possible to convert those materials into '.docx' format using ABBYY FineReader, the accuracy of the converted documents will not be perfect. Mr V clarified,

> *"… Electronic materials are good; I can read them using NVDA, a screen-reading software. But it depends; some materials are image-based, so my vision is not good enough to interpret images, and even recognising faces is impossible. Some materials, even though they are presented in text form by the naked eye, are scanned documents. So, I will need to convert it into Word format using ABBYY FineReader. It helps, but the accuracy is not what is desired. There will always be spelling errors once the document is converted".*
> *"… social statistics require you to calculate things manually. So, it was very difficult. SPSS was not accessible, either. Fonts are tiny, backgrounds are white, not supporting screen reader, high contrast was not supported as well."*

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The excerpt above highlights real barriers that visually impaired students face in accessing course content. During Mr V's studies, he experienced issues with inaccessible course materials. This study found that he faced challenges with printed materials, slow reading, even with electronic magnifiers, and difficulties with image-based and scanned documents that are not properly readable by screen-reading software. It requires time-consuming conversion with imperfect accuracy for him to ease those difficulties.

- ***Unsuitable assessments.***

The unsuitable assessment method is also one of the challenges Mr. V encountered during his academic endeavours. This is apparent during the final year of his studies when he is required to enrol in Physical and Cognitive Evaluation of Children. In this particular course, students are assigned several tasks that require them to administer the Rorschach Inkblot Test and the Draw-A-Person Intelligence Test (DAP: IQ). These assignments are highly visually reliant, which was very challenging for Mr V. He emphasised that he was unable to master the instruments properly, and he felt left out compared to his peers. To complete the assignments, Mr V needs to enlist help from his sighted peers, who can interpret the results from the administered instruments.

> *"This was when I was in my final year. There was a course where we were given assignments. For the assignments, we were asked to administer the Rorschach Inkblot Test and the DAP: IQ test to a person of our choice. It was very difficult for me. Our lecturer taught us how to interpret the images on the inkblot and people's drawings on the DAP: IQ test. However, during those tutorials, I was sitting there, unable to understand. Also, I have no choice but to complete those assignments. I need to ask my groupmates to interpret the findings for me".*

(c) Theme 3: Educational Support System

This section will document the educational support system Mr V had received from UMS. It can be viewed from three domains: mentorship, encouragement, and creative teaching methods. Instances of mentorship and encouragement from lecturers and faculty members facilitated Mr V's learning process through innovative teaching methods. It reflects the lecturer's proactive attitude in demonstrating how dedicated educators can positively impact students with disabilities.

- ***Mentorship***

This study demonstrates that mentorship was crucial in meeting Mr V's needs. Mr V was questioned about the educational support system he had received during his studies at UMS. Predominantly, he received highly supportive faculty members at UMS. Mr V explained that his lecturers went above and beyond the call of duty to facilitate his learning process. For instance,

> *"… Moreover, we are here to assist you. If you need anything, please let us know, and we will do our best to accommodate you."*
> *"…Lecturer M. She taught Introduction to Developmental Psychology during my first semester in year 1. … You know what she did? … Her friend and she read the book and recorded it on audio for me. I was like, Wow".*

As noted above, Mr V explained that his lecturers collaborated to solve his problem by making educational materials more accessible. For example, Lecturer M and her friends read and recorded the main reference book in an audio format, which they then gave to Mr V. This audio creation enables Mr

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V to engage more effectively with his learning process and overcome his visual disability. Lecturer M took a different approach to assist him in his learning. Even though Lecturer M knew Mr V's visual limitation, Lecturer M tried to ease the difficulties of the learning process faced by Mr V. Besides that, Mr V also experienced during the Industrial and Organisational Psychology course, which is taught by Ms R. Mr V illustrated the effectiveness of creative teaching methods employed by Ms R. As Mr V expressed his experience,

> *"…Ms R taught me Industrial and Organisational Psychology. … She was explaining a model to the class. She used several stacks of sticky notes borrowed from other students. She arranged them to follow the structure of the model so I could feel it. I felt so happy back then".*

Ms R recognises Mr V's visual limitations. She innovatively utilised several stacks of sticky notes borrowed from other students to create a tactile representation of a model discussed in class. By arranging the sticky notes to reflect the model's structure, she enabled Mr V to touch and explore the concept actively. It significantly enhances his understanding of the learning process. The excerpt *"I felt so happy back then"* indicates the profound impact of the creative teaching method's interactive approach on Mr V's learning experience. This scenario highlights the importance of adaptive teaching strategies and the positive effects of Mr V's personalised learning experiences and comprehension.

Mr V continued to express his feeling that his lecturer's effort had exceeded his expectations. During the data analysis course, Mr. V encountered significant difficulties in understanding the material presented in the lectures and tutorials by Lecturer F. Acknowledging these challenges, Lecturer F reassured Mr. V with motivation and offered additional face-to-face instruction after class. Mr V reported,

> *"…when I was taking Data Analysis, Lecturer F taught us. Remember? I told you I was unable to follow the course well. … Lecturer F told me: … I understand it is difficult for you. Trust me. I will guide you. You can do it. After we have finished all classes, see me. I will teach you face to face".*
> *"… The final week of the semester, he taught me everything. He showed me where the menus in SPSS are located and where to look for the numbers. It was tough to read the small fonts against the white background. But at least I am able to do it. I was unsure about the newer version, but SPSS could not be accessed with screen-reading software at the time. High-contrast mode was not supported either.*
> *"… And he even gave me extensions to complete all my assignments".*

The excerpt above highlights that Lecturer F was teaching a Data Analysis course and was willing to put in more effort to teach Mr V. In the final week of the semester, Mr. V explained that Lecturer F taught him how to navigate SPSS and locate significant numbers. Lecturer F also provided Mr. V with hands-on instruction on the essential functions of SPSS software. Despite the added difficulty of small font sizes and the absence of accessibility features such as a high-contrast mode, which made reading considerably more challenging, Mr. V displayed remarkable determination and resilience. He articulated his motivation by saying, *"But at least I am able to do it."*. It showcases his commitment to mastering the software. With personalised support and mentorship, Lecturer F effectively addressed Mr. V's specific needs. It emphasises the importance of adaptability and responsiveness in teaching methods. Lecturer F's willingness to grant extensions for assignments not

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only showed his commitment to Mr. V's academic success but also emphasised the importance of understanding and flexibility in educational settings.

In another scenario, Mr. V also reported that he proactively sought support from his academic mentor, Ms. A. She provided personalised guidance by suggesting that Mr. V drop the course and retake it in a later semester when he felt more prepared. To facilitate this process, she provided him with a form to complete, outlining the necessary administrative steps, including obtaining a signature from Lecturer F.

> *"… I went to see Ms A, my academic mentor. I shared my concerns and challenges with her. She suggested I drop the course and retake it once I am ready. She gave me a form to fill out, and I will need to see Lecturer F to get his signature."*

Therefore, all positive factors were identified in this study. The excerpt above emphasises the importance of mentorship, personalised academic support, and how preparation can enhance Mr V's educational journey.

- ***Encouragement***

The study found that the educational support system from the faculty members contributed to Mr V's successful learning journey. Mr V received encouragement from faculty when he first enrolled in UMS. At that time, Mr V planned to request a transfer to another university that provides better accommodations for students with visual impairment. However, after he met his major program coordinator, Mr V felt compelled to continue studying at UMS. Mr V responds,

> *"… During my first semester of Year 1, I attempted to appeal for a transfer to either UM or USM. I went to see my program coordinator. … I explained my issues and concerns to her. She acknowledged my concern. … That gave me some hope."*

Mr V contacted a few faculty members and tried to get their referrals. However, Lecturer S advised Mr V to stay and study at UMS. Lecturer S also asked Mr V to give UMS a chance to improve their facility. Additionally, they will strive to meet Mr V's study needs as Lecturer S advised, who is coded as the program coordinator. She acknowledged Mr V's concerns. She assured Mr. V that faculty members would try to learn and accommodate his needs. As a promise and encouragement from the faculty, Mr V decided to stay at UMS.

> *"Why didn't you try first? Try to go through your studies with us. Moreover, we are here to assist you. If you need anything, let us know, and we will try to accommodate you."*

Furthermore, Mr V also indicated positive encouragement from his lecturer. In a pivotal moment during Mr V's academic journey, he considered dropping his Data Analysis course due to significant difficulties understanding the material. However, Lecturer F responds by firmly refusing to sign the drop form. Lecturer F also intervened with strong encouragement to Mr V,

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> *"… Lecturer F said to me: No. I do not want to sign. I understand it is difficult for you. Trust me. I will guide you. You can do it. Do not waste your time and money. If you drop the course, you will need to extend your studies."*

The scenario above shows that the lecturer believes in Mr. V's potential and is willing to challenge him to persevere. The response not only reflected Lecturer F's belief in Mr. V's potential but also demonstrated empathy and understanding of the challenges he faced. This study also found that the lecturer fostered a supportive environment, which was vital in motivating Mr. V to continue his studies.

- ***Administer the Adjustment of Examination***

Mr. V's experience highlights the vital role of administrative adjustments to Mr V's examinations in conjunction with faculty support in creating an inclusive educational environment. While highly supportive faculty members are crucial, administrative staff adjustments to Mr V's examination are equally important. In Mr V's case, he received an adjustment for his exams, which allowed him to answer questions in an electronic format and allocate extra time. It was crucial given his background in braille and the challenges he faced with handwriting. During his final examination for Social Statistics, Mr. V encountered significant difficulties navigating between his calculator, magnifying glass, and screen-reading software while managing multiple tables of data. He noted that,

> *"My lecturers were very understanding. I informed them I needed exam questions in electronic format and that I would need to answer my exams using a laptop with NVDA.*
> *"I can write, but it will take ages to finish one sentence. So that is not optimal. So, I need to use my laptop."*
> *"To clarify, I was trained in braille in school since I could not perform writing and reading efficiently".*

Mr V illustrates the necessity of using technology to enhance his ability to complete exams efficiently. Moreover, he was allowed to complete all the questions despite having exceeded the maximum time allocated to him. The privilege was made possible due to the understanding and empathy of his examination facilitator, a faculty member from the Academics Department. They observed Mr. V's struggles as he alternated between examining the calculator with his magnifying glass and navigating numerous numbers and tables on his laptop using screen-reading software. He illustrated,

> *"… Remember for Social Statistics? … For exams, we need to use a calculator. Then, navigating tables and all is not so easy. Additionally, you need to verify that the calculation is correct. Moreover, whether the numbers you put in are correct or not. I do not have a talking scientific calculator, nor does the university have one. So, during the final exam, I struggled. Need to use a magnifier to look at my calculator, then navigate tables with my screen reader, checking if everything is good. Initially, I was given only 4 hours to complete the exam. I was not able to complete all the questions. However, the staff from the Department of Academics understood my struggles."*

Mr V continued to explain that the Academics Department authorised him to finish the examination beyond the allotted time and reassured him with supportive words. As the Academic

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Department said, *"It is okay, continue. Finish all the questions."* Her presence and assistance made a significant difference. It allowed Mr. V to complete the exam despite the additional challenges he faced. This situation highlights the crucial role of compassionate administrative support in enabling students with disabilities, such as Mr V, to achieve academic success.

> *"… She was the officer overseeing my exams, as I had to be quarantined because I was answering my questions on a laptop. She stayed with me. By the time I had finished answering, it was already evening".*

4. DISCUSSION

The investigation has revealed that the primary challenge Mr. V faced was academic challenges, as observed through four domains: (a) course-specific difficulty, (b) unsuitable teaching methods, (c) inaccessible materials, and (d) unsuitable assessments. However, his journey at the university was not only governed by challenges but also characterised by a supportive environment that countered those challenges. The support he received included highly supportive faculty members, such as (a) mentorship, (b) encouragement that went beyond the call of duty, creative teaching methods, and (c) administering the Adjustment of Mr V's examination. These findings will be discussed accordingly.

Regarding academic challenges, Mr V struggled the most in visually dependent courses (i.e. Social Statistics and Data Analysis). Of the two, Data Analysis burdened Mr. V the most as he considered dropping the course to be taken later in his studies. It is mainly due to his visual limitations, which impede his understanding of lectures, and the inaccessibility of SPSS with NVDA. It highlights the need for software developers, both for computers and smartphones, to ensure that accessibility with screen-reading software, such as Non-Visual Desktop Access (NVDA) or Job Access with Speech (JAWS), is considered during development [42].

The accessibility of course materials should also be made a priority. In Mr. V's case, his experience with the course materials given is mixed. Some documents are accessible, while others require Optical Character Recognition (OCR) with specialised software, such as ABBYY FineReader. However, the accuracy of the converted documents is unreliable, often dependent on the document's formatting. Inaccessible materials have long been a challenge for individuals with visual impairments in educational settings [10]. Hence, educators are strongly advised to make course materials accessible for students with visual impairment. A guideline issued by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [3] provides comprehensive access to documents for individuals with visual impairments. Elaborating on accessibility, accessible learning platforms should also be prioritised, as the inaccessible design of such platforms will significantly hinder the learning process of students with visual impairments [6, 17].

Other than that, appropriate and fair assessment methods for students with visual impairment are also integral to a proper learning process as they ensure their abilities can be accurately captured. Mr. V was required to administer the DAP: IQ test and the Rorschach Inkblot test for his course assignment, in which image interpretation is necessary. It is unfair and sidelines Mr. V from the learning process. This could also significantly skew Mr. V's assessment score, potentially impacting his overall GPA. Considering alternative assessment, the objective is to ensure equal opportunity, not lower standards [3].

Therefore, developing a tactile version of the Rorschach Inkblot test may be a practical option. However, the researchers are unsure of how it might affect the validity and reliability of the instrument, as even though visual graphics can be effectively designed into tactile graphics, tactile graphics may not fully capture the complex features of visual graphics [3], as for the usage of the DAP: IQ test, a different instrument that can be used to measure personality and intelligence can be used as a substitute.

Educators who are well-equipped with the knowledge and skills to facilitate the inclusion of students with visual impairments are necessary [1]. It cannot be taken lightly as educational entities

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must guarantee full participation in learning for all students [27]. It emphasises the need for universities to be more inclusive. Being inclusive not only benefits students with disabilities but also ensures quality education for all [7]. Notwithstanding, Mr. V has received several forms of support throughout his endeavours. It is evident from the highly supportive faculty members and the accommodations given to students with disabilities for examinations. Many lecturers offer encouragement and go above and beyond their duties to assist their students. Some were reported to be very creative in their teaching methods.

Both educators must be flexible in adapting to the various needs of students, and failure to do so will significantly impact their learning and university experience [20, 21]. Moreover, such adaptations can be viewed as a form of social support, and thus, their absence may contribute to higher dropout rates among students with disabilities [35]. Several studies have also found that support is integral to happiness among individuals with visual impairments, as noted in studies by Teoh and Muhammad Idris [36, 37, 38]. Henceforth, a strong support system is crucial for individuals with visual impairment.

The introduction of the Zero Reject Policy (ZRP) in 2019 has shed light on the experiences of people with disabilities. The ZRP are driven by three main objectives: (1) striving to equip all government related educational bodies with disabled friendly facilities, 2) the implementation of a comprehensive special educational needs program, and 3) offering continuous professional development courses for educators with regards to students with special needs [4, 23]. However, the actual implementation of the policy is questionable due to factors like the readiness of educators and the lack of training [16, 18, 28]. It is also important to highlight that many institutions of higher learning were built without proper accessibility in mind.

While the ZRP demanded that learning institutions offer an accessible environment for students with disabilities, it remains a conundrum to fully realise the mandate, as such an effort involves a significant financial amount. Furthermore, the nature of the ZRP and the 2008 Malaysian Persons with Disabilities Act [12] is administrative, rather than enforcement. Hence, institutions may forego the mandate without suffering any punitive actions. The issue is further compounded when institutions' responsibilities are not clearly defined. For instance, the Malaysian Persons with Disability Act requires reasonable accommodation. However, the term is vague and easily confused or manipulated [15].

5. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This investigation lacks generalizability as it focuses solely on a single case. However, the study offers significant insights into how institutions of higher learning can accommodate students with visual impairment, as many policies and guidelines lack specific examples to assist practitioners in implementing these highlighted demands. Other than that, the accommodation given to Mr. V may only apply to students with limited vision, not those who are entirely blind. Hence, future investigations may tackle this issue by examining effective support systems for totally blind students, especially those enrolled in visually dependent courses. Another interesting venture that could be explored is the modification of existing psychological instruments, which were initially designed to be visually dependent (e.g., the Rorschach Inkblot Test), into an instrument that persons with visual impairments can administer.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the journey of Mr. V, a first-class honours student with visual impairment at UMS, highlights the challenges and support systems crucial for the success of students with disabilities. Despite facing significant academic challenges, such as course-specific difficulties, inaccessible materials, and unsuitable assessment methods, Mr. V's perseverance, combined with the unwavering support of faculty members and administrative staff, played a pivotal role in his achievements. The university's encouragement, creative teaching methods, and accommodations facilitated his learning and set a precedent for how educational institutions can effectively support students with visual

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impairments. This case study highlights the importance of inclusive education and underscores the need for ongoing efforts to create accessible and supportive learning environments for all students. By addressing the unique needs of students with disabilities, universities can ensure that every student has the opportunity to succeed and thrive in their academic pursuits.

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