
Analysis Study on the Existence of Audiological Health Workers in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The existence of audiologist healthcare professionals in Indonesia is still limited and faces multiple challenges, including uneven distribution, insufficient graduates, weak regulation, and low public awareness. This study aims to analyze the existence of audiologists in Indonesia by identifying recognition barriers, professional activities, and the level of awareness from society and government. A descriptive qualitative approach was applied through in-depth interviews, observations, and document reviews with audiologists. Thematic analysis revealed limited recognition of audiologists' roles, overlapping responsibilities with other healthcare workers, and the absence of clear career pathways such as civil servant (ASN) status. The findings highlight that audiologists play an important role in early detection and rehabilitation of hearing loss, yet their existence remains vulnerable due to inadequate institutional and regulatory support. It is recommended to strengthen regulations, expand educational access, and enhance public promotion to integrate audiologists as an essential part of Indonesia's national healthcare system.

Keywords: Audiologist, Professional Recognition, Hearing Healthcare, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Public health which has a significant impact on the quality of life of individuals. Decreased hearing skills not only interfere with communication, but also affect social, emotional, and cognitive development. WHO (2018) reports that 466 million people in the world have hearing loss, including 34 million children. In Indonesia, Riskesdas (2018) recorded the prevalence of deafness in early childhood, while SIMPD data (2019) shows that people with hearing disabilities reach 7.03% of the total people with disabilities.

This condition demands the strategic role of audiological health workers who are tasked with detecting, diagnosing, and rehabilitating hearing loss. However, the audiology profession in Indonesia still faces various obstacles. The number of audiology personnel is limited, the distribution is uneven, and the profession recognition is still low at both the community and government levels. This causes a gap in audiology services, especially in remote areas.

In addition, the phenomenon of noise exposure in the work environment, the use of high-volume earphones, and age factors exacerbate the burden of hearing loss. Although the Ministry of Health's "Sound of Hearing 2030" program aims to reduce the prevalence of preventable hearing loss, the biggest challenge remains the limitations of audiological human resources.

In the perspective of George Herbert Mead's role theory and Eliot Freidson's professional theory, the existence of a profession is formed through social interaction, legal legitimacy, and community needs. The audiology profession in Indonesia has not fully gained this legitimacy. Therefore, it is important to conduct a study that analyzes the existence of audiology personnel in order to formulate a strategy to strengthen the role in the national health system.

Based on this background, this study is focused on analyzing the existence of audiological health workers in Indonesia by highlighting aspects of profession recognition, activities, and levels of awareness of the community and the government.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The research location was conducted in health facilities that employ audiologists, including hospitals, hearing centers, and educational institutions. The research will be carried out for six months in 2024.

The research informants are audiologists, other health workers who collaborate with audiologists, and representatives of professional organizations. The selection of informants was carried out by purposive sampling by considering experience and relevance to the research topic. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation of audiologists' activities, and document review (government regulations, professional organization reports, and educational institution data). Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore the perceptions, experiences, and challenges faced by audiologists.

Data analysis uses thematic analysis techniques with coding, categorization, and theme interpretation steps. Data validity is maintained through triangulation of sources (audiologists, other health workers, and official documents) and member checking to informants.

This research is based on health research ethics, with informed consent from all participants, maintaining identity confidentiality, and only using data for academic purposes.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The research was conducted in several strategic locations that represent the ecosystem of the audiological profession in Indonesia, especially in Jakarta. The selection of locations was purposive based on data accessibility, institutional relevance, and the existence of the main actors of the audiological profession. The research location consists of the Secretariat Office of the Audiological Professional Organization (PERAUDI) located at Jl. Proklamasi No. 43, Menteng, Central Jakarta. This building is the center of the activities of audiological professional organizations in Indonesia. This is where administrative management, professional advocacy activities, and coordination with government agencies and across professions are carried out.

The Indonesian Academy of Audiology (AAI), With the same address as the PERAUDI Secretariat office on Jl. Proclamation No. 43, Menteng, Central Jakarta. As the only formal educational institution in the field of clinical audiology in Indonesia, AAI plays an important role in producing audiologists. Data from this institution provides insight into education and development of audiological competencies. Proclamation ENT Hospital (PERHATI) This ENT specialist hospital is one of the places of practice for audiologists, both for clinical and research activities. PERAUDI and AAI, Field Practice: Hospitals and Hearing Centers, Research is also conducted in several hospitals and hearing centers where audiologists conduct routine practice

informant characteristic

This study involved ten informants consisting of audiological practitioners and

Table.1 Tabulation of Research Informants by Age

Initials	Jenis Kelamin	Age	Quantity	Role
Nn. W	P	29	1	They report
Nn. C	P	38	1	Key Informant
Tn. A	L	27	1	They report
Nn. A	P	32	1	They report
Tn. Ch	L	50	1	They report
Nn. H	P	28	1	They report
Nn. J	P	25	1	They report
Tn. D	L	33	1	They report
Nos. E	P	30	1	Key Informant
Nn. HE	P	45	1	They report
Quantity			10	

Source: Processed Researcher Based on Research Informant

1. Lack of Recognition of the Profession

The results of the study show that the audiology profession still faces major obstacles in gaining recognition in Indonesia. The lack of structural support, low peer understanding, and lack of clear regulations cause audiologists to be often underestimated. An informant mentioned that audiologists in hospitals are "often not considered in the structure" and even have the status of honorary workers (Nn. W, 29 years old). This illustrates the marginalized position in the health care system.

In addition, there is still confusion about the position of the profession in the hospital structure. Another informant said that at the beginning of the work he did not know which unit he was under which unit, so audiology was considered part of nursing (Mrs. A, 32 years old). In fact, several other health workers still question the existence of this profession.

2. Lack of Community Understanding

People in general are still misunderstood in understanding the profession of audiologist. Many equate it with an ENT nurse, a sound technician, or just a hearing aid officer. "People rarely know what an audiologist is," said an informant (Mr. A, 27 years old). Some even think that audiology is a profession related to regulating the audio system. This low public literacy has an impact on patients' lack of trust in audiologists as independent health workers.

3. Lack of Professional Promotion

The lack of recognition is also exacerbated by the weak promotion of the profession, both internally and externally. The informant highlighted that the still very small number of audiologists makes promotional efforts ineffective. "The manpower is still very small, so colleagues are still limited" (Mr. D, 33 years old). As a result, audiologists are rarely known in policy forums or the wider community.

In addition, the lack of publication and socialization from educational institutions worsens the condition. An informant from an educational institution emphasized that low promotion has a direct impact on the low interest of prospective students to pursue this field.

4. Promotion is Carried Out Independently

In the limited availability of institutional support, many audiologist practitioners take the initiative to introduce their profession. They often educate patients directly or small communities.

One informant revealed, "As practitioners, we must continue to convince and educate patients" (Nn. C, 38 years old).

However, this independent strategy is still personalized, unsystematic, and lacks a wider audience. As a result, the audiology profession remains poorly known nationally.

5. Lack of Institutional Promotion

Other results show that professional promotion from educational institutions and professional organizations is still very limited. One of the informants emphasized the need for the campus to be more active in introducing audiology through the development of S1 and S2 study programs so that this profession is better known and appreciated (Nn. J, 25 years old). Another informant added that the current promotion is "still difficult and few" (Nn. A, 32 years old).

This condition confirms that the audiological profession is still in the early stages of the struggle to gain public and institutional legitimacy

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that the audiology profession in Indonesia still faces complex recognition issues, including structural, social, and regulatory aspects. The lack of formal recognition causes audiologists to often be marginalized in the hospital system, and do not even have a clear position in the organizational structure. This is in line with the findings of Mead (1934) regarding the formation of social identity that is strongly influenced by interaction with the environment. Without recognition from institutions and peers, the professional identity of audiologists is difficult to form.

The lack of public understanding adds to the challenges for the existence of the profession. The misperception that equates audiologists with voice technicians or ENT nurses shows low public literacy. In fact, WHO research (2021) confirms that audiologists play an important role in the prevention and rehabilitation of hearing loss. When the public does not understand this role, audiology services are not optimally utilized.

Weak professional promotion, both at the individual and institutional levels, exacerbates audiological alienation. Promotion carried out personally by practitioners shows professional commitment, but it is not enough to change the collective perception of society. According to Freidson (2001), professional legitimacy requires strong institutional support, including government regulations and academic recognition. Without it, it will be difficult for the profession to obtain an equal status with other health workers.

The lack of graduates is also an important factor that hinders professional recognition. With the number of audiologist staff still very limited, the opportunity to build a network of collaboration, policy advocacy, and representation at the national level is very small. This condition creates a cycle of professional misinformation: the number of workers is small → limited promotion → interest in prospective students is low → slow regeneration.

Other findings show that higher education has a strategic role in introducing the audiological profession. The development of S1 and S2 study programs will not only increase the number of graduates, but also increase academic legitimacy and strengthen professional branding. This is in line with professional theory that emphasizes the importance of a formal education base in strengthening professional identity.

In addition to education, government support through regulations is also very necessary. Until now, audiologists do not have a functional position as an ASN or the obligation to place in health facilities. Without these regulations, the existence of audiologists will continue to depend on the initiative of individuals and professional organizations.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study confirm the need for a more massive and structured promotion strategy. Public promotion based on national health campaigns can

increase public literacy about the importance of hearing screening. Meanwhile, internal promotion in health facilities will strengthen collaboration with other medical personnel.

Furthermore, strengthening professional organizations is also key in fighting for regulations, protecting members, and expanding professional recognition. Without a solid organization, audiologists will find it difficult to speak out in national health policy forums.

Thus, this discussion shows that the existence of audiology in Indonesia is at a crossroads. This profession has a vital role in hearing health, but its existence is still weak due to the lack of structural, social, and regulatory recognition. If the support of education, professional organizations, and the government can synergize, then the audiology profession has great potential to develop and contribute to the national health system.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the existence of audiological health workers in Indonesia still faces serious challenges, both in terms of number, distribution, regulation, and public recognition. Although audiologists have a vital role in the detection and rehabilitation of hearing loss, this profession has not been fully recognized in the structure of the national health system.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the research, several things are suggested, including:

1. The government needs to immediately establish mandatory regulations for the presence of audiologists in health facilities.
2. The expansion of audiology education institutions in various regions to accelerate the fulfillment of the needs of professionals.
3. Strengthening the organization of the audiological profession so that it can advocate for regulations and professional protection.
4. Education and public promotion related to the role of audiology to increase public awareness.
5. Development of audiological career paths, including recognition as a functional position of ASN.

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