

Parents' Perspective Towards Inclusive Education for Children with Intellectual Disabilities in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of inclusive education is a part of the school program which emerged as the realization from the program education for all which gives changes for children with special needs to learn along with the regular students at regular schools. This study aims to understand parents' perception towards inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities at schools. This study used a mixed method for the research. The validity of the questionnaire instrument tested by using Cronbach's Alpha with the result of 0,801. The respondents sample size consists of 256 parents in total, who have children with intellectual ability differ from each other and all enrolled in school in the academic year 2018-2019. The data was analyzed using ANOVA with statistical SPSS 24 and the qualitative data was processed with Nvivo. The result of the study showed that parents support the implementation of inclusive education since it is believed to have many advantages that can be gained by the children with intellectual disabilities. This study suggested that teachers and parents should not only be connected for general communication but also connected to communicate about school programs related to the development of the children.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Parents' Perspective, Children with Intellectual Disabilities*

1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become one of the prioritized educational policies in many countries ever since the release of UNESCO Salamanca Statement in 1994 for children with special needs. Inclusive education is implemented to give chances for every student, including for children with special needs (CSN), children with intelligence potential and/or special talent to participate in education or learning activity in an educational environment at regular school along with the regular students. There are many previous studies which have proved that CSN who studied at regular school shows better development in social skills and in interacting with regular students which would help them to blend into social community in adulthood (Lindsay, 2018) (Magnússon, 2020). Based on literature study, there were some articles suggesting CSN to learn at inclusive school to gain advantages on interacting with regular students at school (Sudarto, 2017) (R Sermier Dessemontet, Bless, & Morin, 2012). Inclusive education gives many advantages especially for children with special needs, although its implementation is yet to be maximized in

giving learning services in the classroom. (Mohd Arifudin & Mohd Mokhtar, 2020). One of the ways that could be implemented to maximize inclusive classrooms is by preparing the learning programs ahead (Gokbulut, Akcamete, & Guneyli, 2020). Numerous difficulties occurring at school are not faced by CSN only, but also by the friends, the teachers and even the parents.

Parents of children with special needs oftentimes support the implementation of inclusive approach (Tryfon, Anastasia, & Eleni, 2019) These parents hope that the implementation of inclusive education would help their children to strengthen their social skills and contribute to their personal development generally. For example, by the improvement of sensitivity towards others' needs and by learning to ask and to respect differences (Magumise & Sefotho, 2020). Parents should also contribute as their important roles to support and promote inclusive education. Furthermore, they have been the supporter of the movement to include children with special needs to mainstream education (de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2010).

Parents hope for the children who experience difficulties at inclusive school to have the opportunity to get back to school (Ummah, Tahar, & Hanafi, 2020). Parents' role becomes important in inclusive education, that is as the guardian of their children when they are in need of help and to give learning information at school (Tryfon et al., 2019). To enable parents' participation in the CSN education, it is essential to understand parents' perspective towards the education of children with special needs. Parents' perspective could facilitate parent-school partnership which is important for the success in implementing inclusive education at school (Lui, Sin, Yang, Forlin, & Ho, 2015).

During the implementation, teachers tend to focus on giving information to parents about the activity at school instead of building harmonious relationships between school and parents (TITREK, BAYRAKÇI, & NGULUMA, 2017). Different perceptions between teachers and parents about parents' participation could also detain the harmonious relationships between schools and parents.

The impact is that teachers find it difficult to communicate with parents in involving parents with school (Paseka & Schwab, 2020). Parents are one of the important factors for inclusive education systems since parents' support will have an impact on the implementation of inclusive education. The implementation of inclusive education is developing and the evaluation of its effectiveness becomes important to all. Parents of children with special needs have become the supporter of inclusive education and they play the main role in reforming education towards inclusivity.

2. METHODS

This research will use a mixed method as the design of the research. Qualitative approach is used to gain information about parents' perspective at inclusive schools. This design combines qualitative and quantitative data, which will be useful to obtain data and enrich the finding (Creswell 2015). The plan of quantitative method consists of some steps which will be executed by the researcher by collecting and obtaining information from sources who have understanding about the relevant topic so that the researcher could answer the question formulated in the study.

The data will be gathered by using a questionnaire. Questionnaire is one of the most common instruments used to collect information from the sources (Creswell, 2015). The data is collected by requesting the parents to fill the questionnaire, which consists of four sections of questions. The questionnaire is using Likert scale with five points/degrees of choice (1 strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 neutral, 4 disagree, 5 strongly disagree). In the first section, parents will be asked to fill demographic information in details (gender, age, and educational

background). In the second section, parents will be asked to share their perspective towards the educational service (for example, satisfaction towards inclusive school).

In the third section, parents will be asked to give information related to opportunities given to CSN students and the last section will be about the environmental support for children at inclusive schools. The validity of the questionnaire instrument is tested by using Cronbach's Alpha (Cronbach's Alpha: 0,801). The sample respondents consisted of 256 parents in total, whose children have different levels of identity and all were enrolled in school in the academic year 2018-2019.

The questionnaire is filled by the respondents to express their perspective towards the implementation of inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities at school. Aside from questionnaires, data in this study also gathered from interviews. Interview is a special pattern of verbal interaction for specific purposes, and is focused on specific content, with elimination process from irrelevant topics sustainably (Creswell, 2012).

The interview is an element of qualitative research and enables the researcher to gain further understanding on the study which will affect the holistic comprehension towards the phenomena experienced by the interviewees, such as attitude, perception, motivation and acts (Moleong, 2020). The quantitative analysis will be done with ANOVA, which aims to show several aspects that could be discussed related to parents' perception towards the success of inclusive education. Then, the qualitative data will be analyzed by using Nvivo.

The data collection process in this study started from April to October 2021. The researchers visited schools implementing inclusive education by contacting the headmaster of 34 schools which are located in 8 different regions in East Java. Researchers informed the headmaster in regards to the purpose of the study and request for parents' personal information as well as the permission to fill the questionnaires.

3. RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to describe parents' perspective towards the implementation of inclusive education, the opportunities for CSN with intellectual disabilities in inclusive school as well as the role of environment for CSN at school. Here is the demographic information of the respondents in this study.

Based on Table 1, from the total 256 parents as respondents, 175 of them had interacted with children with special needs and 137 of them were interacting with children from the age 5 to 8. Hence, even if they have no children with special needs, they can relate and understand how to interact with children with special needs.

Table 1. Parents’ Demographic

Demographic	Frequency	Percent
Relation with children		
Biological children	198	74,72
Non-biological children	58	21,89
Children’s gender		
Male	133	50,19
Female	123	46,42
Educational Qualification		
Postgraduate	76,00	28,68
Graduate	125,00	47,17
Others	55,00	20,75

Normality test is conducted to see whether the data spread used for each variable is distributed normally. The analysis was done by using Kolmogorov-Sminirnov test, where the data spread was situated to have normal distribution if the test result score is greater than 0,5.

Table 1. Data Normality Test

Variable	Normality	Standard	Remarks
Parents’ Perspective	0,165	0,05	Normal

Source: Data Primer Analysis, 2021

Data in Table 2 showed that the score of the normality test is greater than 0,05 so all the data is distributed normally. Aside from using Kolmogorov-Sminirnov normality test, data distribution could also be seen by looking at the Q-Q normality graphic. The plot is included in the appendix. In the Q-Q graphic, a plot of a variable is considered to have near-normal distribution if the dots in the graphic are located near the line or near to the horizontal line value zero. The nearest the dots get, means the variable used in the study is more normal.

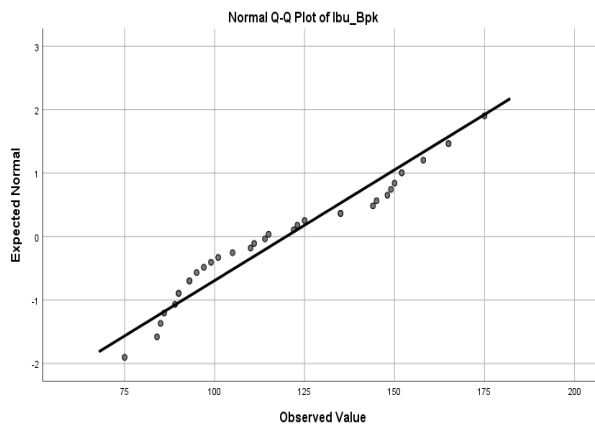


Figure 1 Q-Q Plot

Based on Figure 1 related to Q-Q plot, it can be seen that the dots in the graphic were all located near the line or near the horizontal line value zero. Hence, all the data used in this study is normal.

From the results of the ANOVA test, it is known that there is a significant relationship between inclusive education and parents of children with special needs. This is evidenced by the sig. value which is smaller than 0.05, which is 0.046. The results of the quantitative test showed that there is a significant impact between inclusive education on parents’ support. This shows that parents are one of the factors that determine whether students with special needs can continue their education inclusively or not. The availability of support from parents can change the acceptance of the child's condition and provide opportunities for children to learn. The support provided by parents is also in the form of assistance for children so that they can adapt and socialize with friends at school. Parents feel happy if their children attend inclusive schools. For parents, they believe the children can develop at least their social sense with regular or normal friends. In addition, parents are also satisfied with the inclusive education services provided in schools.

Based on the results of acceptance of students, that is how parents accept the condition of their children. Parents certainly realize that their children have shortcomings and need special attention. From the results of interviews with some of their parents, they stated that:

“Back then when giving birth, we know that our child has special needs. Kinda surprised too. However, it is a gift from God. We are grateful because we are physically normal” (S/ 28/05/21)

“During the pregnancy, we already know that our child will have abnormalities, well physically he is normal. But the child has disability, we realized and we accept it. We treat him like any other child.” (W/ 28/07/21)

“It’s okay. We have been aware of this from the start. We do not give him different treatment from the normal siblings, but we still give special treatment in some cases, not pampering but providing support and assistance.” (L/ 28/07/21).

Good support from parents for children with special needs will increase children's confidence, so that children are able to get along, learn and socialize with friends. With better confidence, the child could grow up better.

One of the main obstacles faced by parents with children with special needs is formal education. In Indonesia, children with special needs are often included in special schools (SLB). Children with special needs do not always have to go to SLB. Therefore, the government established inclusive schools, by trying to mix regular students or normal students with children with special

needs. Learning opportunities provided by the government to children with special needs in regular schools will not be achieved without the support of the parents.

“As parents of children with special needs, we strongly support the inclusive school program carried out by the government. We realize and we want our children to be able to get along and socialize and get a normal education like other children.” (N/28/05/21)

“The first time my son entered an inclusive school, as a parent I also feel a bit anxious, yes. How should they get along? How do teachers deal with it? How about the course grades? However, there is good understanding and cooperation from schools, teachers and us as parents, so far our children are also doing well there.” (M/29/05/21)

Both opinions stated that parental acceptance of students or their children who attend inclusive schools will not only come from one direction from parents, but also requires support from teachers and principals where the child is enrolled to. In addition, another thing revealed in this study is whether this inclusion provides benefits for CSN? From these questions, the parents answered:

“There are benefits, at least my son can get along and go to school with normal friends” (O/25/05/21)

“Other answers given by the other parents are “that my child likes to learn at elementary school with his friends since the friends are all kind. She will invite them to play during the break.” (P/27/05/21)

Hence, parents feel that their children are being accepted well at school and feel like their children are happier since the friends are all kind and considerate. Another problem faced by children with special needs is about their adapting skills. Physically, they will feel normal, but they also realized that they need special attention and could not do some things the way other normal children do.

Parents of children with special needs know and understand about it well. Support fully given to parents so that the children can adapt to their environment.

“At school, we encourage children to play and learn together with their friends. As well as during the break, we always keep a distance at school so they could socialize better with their friends.” (B/28/05/21)

“At first, it’s hard to leave them alone. When the learning starts, they will cry, throw tantrums and ask to leave. By having an assistant teacher or class teacher who is understanding of CSN, it will help children to socialize better and that they can play with their friends like a regular student.” (T/28/05/21)

4. DISCUSSION

The practice of inclusive education has been implemented in some countries, however there are some differences in its implementation (Echeita & Ainscow, 2011) (Forlin, 2013). Children with intellectual disabilities have the biggest numbers of enrollment in inclusive schools. With relatively big numbers among the CSN community, they become a group which tends to be excluded in many public services including health and educational services (Kristiyanti, 2019). Perspective towards children with intellectual disabilities truly affect the process of their acceptance. Stereotypes of children with intellectual disabilities range from positive to some of negative stereotypes. (Gasteiger-Klicpera, Klicpera, Gebhardt, & Schwab, 2013) explained that the society has a perspective towards people with intellectual disabilities. However, the common perspective constructed towards people with intellectual disabilities is limited to academic and social only. With the implementation of inclusive education, negative perspectives and attitudes towards people with intellectual disabilities can be eradicated. Inclusive education will open more opportunities and chances in fulfilling educational rights of people with disabilities, especially people with intellectual disabilities at school so they can learn together with friends.

The result showed that most of the parents expressed that they are happy with the implementation of inclusive education that could accept children with special needs at regular schools. This perspective aligned with the opinion from (de Boer et al., 2010). This is also in line with (Carter, Stephenson, & Webster, 2019) who explained that teachers should also be assisted by their assistants to fulfill the academic needs of children with special needs in the classroom. (Raguindin, Ping, Duereh, & Lising, 2020) mentioned that positive attitudes for teachers at school should be higher since they should facilitate students with special needs at school. The implementation of teaching-learning in an inclusive classroom indeed requires partnership between classroom teacher and special assistant teacher (SAT) to give academic service that could accommodate children with special needs in the classroom (Stevens & Wurf, 2020).

In the implementation of inclusive education, many of the parents evaluate the partnership between teachers and parents to be more significant in giving service of inclusive education that could accommodate their children, to achieve the aim of accessible education for the children. Usually, teachers and the school team would generally focus on giving information briefly about the children at school, instead of building harmonious relationships between teachers and parents (Paseka & Schwab, 2020) (Amka, 2019). One of the main problems that the parents should face is the limited information about the education of their children and the lack of

assistance in providing support for the children for learning at home activities. Services that are provided by the teachers to students with special needs can help children to gain advantages in various ways, such as the lessening of negative stigma towards children with special needs and the increase of acceptance towards children with intellectual disabilities at school. Selain itu adanya manfaat pembelajaran bersama-sama yang melibatkan anak regular dan anak-anak hambatan intelektual di sekolah (Lui et al., 2015). Parents really hope for their children to be accepted well at school because the disabilities are not chronic or even really chronic. Parents feel like their children can go to school and be accepted, but on the other hand, teachers are still looking for ways to accommodate learning in the classroom so they can maximize the improvement of students' skills during the implementation of inclusive education which needs lots of teams to achieve the success (Maria, 2013) (Xiaoli, 2015).

According to the parents of children with intellectual disabilities, their children are accepted well at school and by the environment. There are benefits, especially for children, in socializing with the regular children and the other children with intellectual disabilities at school (Rachel Sermier Dessemontet & Bless, 2014). Both can learn to befriend or play with each other (Dewi, 2017) (Jauhari, 2017). Schools could also accept the diversity of the students by accepting students to learn together (Mumpuniarti, Handoyo, Phytanza, & Barotuttaqiyah, 2020).

5. CONCLUSION

The result of this study showed that parents of children with intellectual disabilities chose to enroll their children in inclusive school with some consideration, that is for children's development to be more improved in social aspects. Furthermore, the role of school effectiveness in promoting inclusive education has been implemented according to the procedure of the implementation of inclusive education as well as the establishment of partnership between teachers and the school team. One of the essential factors in supporting the success of inclusive education is the parents since they play an important role to promote inclusive education. In addition, the policies on the practice of inclusive education is focusing on the teachers training to work together with the parents of children with intellectual disabilities so they could accommodate children's academic needs in the classroom.

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