

Teacher's Attitudes toward Inclusive Education and Their Emotional Support for Students with Special Education Needs: A Study in Inclusive Preschools

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Abstract—Inclusive Education (IE) provides social and emotional development opportunities for Student with Special Education Needs (SEN). Teachers play a critical role in helping children. To improve social skills, teacher and SEN can build a good interactions. One of the three domains of teacher student interaction is, called emotional support. This support is an important fundamental thing done by the teacher so students have independence and initiative and would eventually help students develop social skills and competencies. Interactions between teachers and students relate to positive teacher attitudes toward IE. This study aims to measure teacher's emotional support and teacher attitudes towards IE, in an inclusive preschool. This study used a quantitative research method with 201 teachers from inclusive Preschool in Jakarta and other area as participants. Respondents were collected by purposive sampling. The results indicated that there are significant effects between behavior (aspect of teacher's attitudes) and teacher's emotional support. Behavior also have significant effects to each aspects of teacher's emotional support.

Keywords—*inclusive education; teacher's attitudes; emotional support; preschool; special education needs*

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a right for all human beings, including children with special needs as stated in the National Education System Law Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. Children with special educational needs are children with special characteristics, that is, children who differ significantly in some important dimensions in connection with their human functions, such as physical, psychological, cognitive, and social [1]. Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) need special handling to develop their potential [2]. Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture states that from 1.6 million students with SEN in 2017, only 18 percent received education services (special schools = 115 thousand; Inclusive Education (IE) = 299 thousand) [3]. The data shows that there are still many SENs who do not receive education as stipulated in constitution. Therefore, the government continues to improve regular schools to implement IE, so that students with SEN could easily access the education.

Handling and teaching students with SEN requires a strategy that fits their individual needs. According to Smart [4] inclusive education is education in public schools that are tailored to the needs of students who need special education in public schools in a systemic unit. Regulation from the Minister of National Education number 70 of 2009 defines inclusive education as a system of implementing education that provides an opportunity for all students who have special needs and / or special talents to attend education or in an educational environment together with students in general. In addition, IE provides social and emotional development opportunities for students with SEN through interaction with regular students who are also present in their daily lives. In some research, inclusive education plays an important role for children with special needs in their early childhood [5].

When we take into consideration the effect preschool education, known as a critical period and a period in which the foundation of personality is built, children with SEN need the importance of inclusive education. This needs increases that much more. Looking at studies that address the effects of inclusive education on peer relations and social skills of young children. [6] applied the Teacher Support Programme for Inclusive Education. This program addresses self-care skills, motor, social, cognitive, and language development. In the preschool years, most children learn to successfully navigate a complex world of friendships and adult relationships in environments with new rules, routines, and expectations for behaviors such as waiting, conversing, sharing small-group and large-group spaces, and taking turns. Teachers play a critical role in helping children understand how social interactions begin and improve children's social skill, that is critical in preschool period. Success and the quality of inclusive education cannot be separated from the role of teachers in supporting inclusive education. Teachers have an important role in the implementation of inclusive education because teachers have more time to interact with students in the classroom.

There is research that says a teacher and student interaction is an important experience for early childhood. [7] suggested that the learning interactions children experienced in a classroom

are composed of three domains: emotional support for learning, organizational support for learning, and instructional support for learning. Of the three domains, emotional support is an important fundamental factor done by the teacher so that students have independence and initiative [8] and help students develop social skills and competencies [9]. Social skills and social competence are key areas of preschool teaching and learning. In the preschool years, most children learn to successfully navigate a complex world of friendships and adult relationships in environments with new rules, routines, and expectations for such behaviors as waiting, conversing, sharing small- and large-group spaces, and taking turns.

Teacher's emotional support is defined by [10] as interactions between teachers and students characterized by a warm and pleasant relationship, teachers who are sensitive to the needs of students, and respect students' interests and opinions. According to [11] teacher emotional support is an effort made by teachers to support the social and emotional functions of students in the classroom through interactions between teachers and students as well as interactions between students and students.

Teacher's emotional support consists of three components, namely a positive climate, teacher's sensitivity, and the teacher being considerate of the student's perspective. Positive climate is a class atmosphere characterized by the positive feelings of teachers towards students, giving positive comments, and showing appreciation and warmth to students [10]. Students who feel a positive climate in the classroom tend to have warm relationships with their teachers and peers and are more involved in learning. The sensitivity of the teacher is the sensitivity and concern of the teacher to the academic, social, and emotional needs and the level of development of each student. Teachers who have high sensitivity are shown by consistent and responsive interactions with their students, are able to create an environment that makes students feel safe and knows how to respond and help students in alleviating their problems. Considers students' perspectives is how teacher encourages and provides opportunities for students to express their ideas and opinions, and pay attention to student interests and motivations.

Teacher's emotional support to students plays a role in improving student performance and academic performance, including students with SEN [12]. Based on research conducted by Merritt et al. [13], teacher's high emotional support to students can reduce students' aggressive behavior and improve their self-control. Thus, it is very important for students to get emotional support from the teacher in order to have developments in the academic and social fields [11]. Research on teacher emotional support for students in inclusive education has not been done much. However, inclusive implementation can be achieved if the teacher provides emotional support to all students, both regular students and students with SEN.

Interactions between teachers and students relate to positive teacher attitudes toward IE [14]. The successful implementation of IE relates to several factors, namely

positive teacher attitudes, the existence of teachers with special educational backgrounds, facilities for SENs, and special SENs curriculum [15]. Based on these factors, positive teacher attitudes are the most important factor in the successful implementation of IE [16]. Positive teacher attitudes towards IE will influence the implementation of acceptance and support for inclusive education [17] The attitude itself is a disposition of someone to respond favorably (positively, liking, agreeing, happily, and so forth) or unfavorably (negatively, disliking, disagreeing, and so forth) towards objects, people, institutions and circumstances [18]. The attitude that one believes is often predicts how his/her response to a situation, including the response to students with SEN [19]. There are three important components of attitudes, namely cognitive, affective, and behavioral. In the context of IE, the cognitive component is the teacher's knowledge of inclusive education, the affective component is the teachers' feelings about inclusive education, and the behavioral component is the willingness of teachers to take actions related to inclusive education [15]. The three components are interconnected and influence each other in the teacher's attitude towards IE.

Based on the explanation above, in this study it will be seen how teacher attitudes towards IE have an effect on teacher emotional support conducted in preschool inclusive settings. The hypothesis of this study are:

1. There is a significant effect between teacher's attitudes towards inclusive education and teacher's emotional support in inclusive preschools.
2. There is a significant effect between each aspects of teacher attitudes towards inclusive education (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) and each aspect of teacher's emotional support (positive climate, teacher's sensitivity, and the teacher considers the student's perspective) in inclusive preschools.

II. METHOD

A. Respondents, Procedure, and Instrument

This study used a quantitative research method 201 teachers from Inclusive Kindergarten teachers in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi as participants. These cities were chosen in terms of the feasibility of access to have respondents in this study. Questionnaires are made online using *Google* form and offline. Sampling was conducted by non-random sampling using accidental sampling technique. This technique is used because there are not many inclusive early childhood education schools in Indonesia, thus participants who fit the research criteria are difficult to obtain. The online questionnaires were distributed by asking people who know teachers in inclusive early childhood education schools and distributing questionnaire links to participants or through social media. The link that must be filled includes intent, purpose, informed consent, and research questionnaire. Each participant will answer on the form provided and collected online by pressing the submit button. While the offline questionnaire is distributed to schools that have given permission to collect data. The questionnaire was then given

to the participant and then would be asked to fill it in until completion and afterwards the questionnaire was submitted back to the researcher.

The attitudes of kindergarten teachers toward IE were measured using a Multidimensional Attitudes questionnaire toward Inclusive Education Scale Indonesian Version (MATIES-IV) by [20] adapted from the same scale by [21]. The MATIES-IV questionnaire has good validity coefficient, between 0.26 - 0.80 and the reliability of the three components with alpha values which are also good; cognitive ($\alpha = 0.77$), affective ($\alpha = 0.80$), behavior ($\alpha = 0.81$). The scale measured the attitude towards IE which are consisted of three aspects: cognitive, affective, and behavior. This MATIES-IV questionnaire was consisted of 18 items representing the cognitive aspects (6 items), affective (6 items), and behavior (6 items). The scale used a six-point Likert type scale, ranged from 1 to 6 (1=strong disagreement and 6=strong agreement).

The emotional support variable measured using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) questionnaire Indonesian Version by [22] adapted from the scale by [23]. The CLASS questionnaire has good validity coefficient, between 0.34 - 2.13 and the reliability of the three components with alpha values are also good: positive climate ($\alpha = 0.87$), teacher's sensitivity ($\alpha = 0.82$), and the teacher considers the student's perspective ($\alpha = 0.84$). This CLASS questionnaire is consisted of 11 items representing the positive climate (5 items), teacher's sensitivity (4 items), and the teacher considers the student's perspective (2 items). The scale used a four-point Likert type scale, ranged from 1 to 4 (1=strong disagreement and 4=strong agreement). The data were self-report of all respondents.

Data were analyzed using multiple regression techniques to see the effect of teacher's attitudes towards IE education to teacher's emotional support on inclusive preschool.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

TABLE I. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF PARTICIPANTS

Demographics	N (n=201)
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	28
Female	174
<i>Education background</i>	
High School	8
Diploma	6
Undergraduated	174
Postgraduated	14
<i>Teaching experience in IE</i>	
Less than a month	5
1-12 months	39
1-3 years	96
3-5 years	41
More than 5 years	21
<i>Training experience</i>	
Yes	171
No	30

Descriptive methods of data demographics shows that in this study there are more female participants than male participants. Most participants have higher educational level and most of them had experienced with SEN through teaching experience or interaction with students with SEN. Most of participants have 1-3 years experiences as preschool inclusive teacher. Also, most of participants have training experiences about inclusive education or about SENs area.

TABLE II. TEACHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD IE AND TEACHER'S EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Variable	B	SE B	β	p
Constant	25.961	5.019	-	0.000
Cognitive	-0.054	0.074	-0.054	0.464
Affective	0.003	0.076	0.003	0.967
Behavior	0.532	0.063	0.532	0.000

The results of table 2 shows that teachers' attitude toward IE has a significant effect on teachers' emotional support in the behavior aspect. Aspects of teachers' attitude toward IE which significantly influence teachers' emotional support in total are conative / behavior ($B = 0.532, p < 0.05$). Meanwhile, cognitive aspects ($B = -0.054, p > 0.05$) and affective ($B = 0.003, p > 0.05$) did not have significant influence. The R (square) value of 28.4% indicates that the proportion of the variance in emotional support in total teachers can be explained by teachers' attitude toward IE.

TABLE III. TEACHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD IE AND POSITIVE CLIMATE

Variable	B	SE B	β	p
Constant	27.851	5.110	-	0.000
Cognitive	-0.088	0.075	-0.088	0.245
Affective	0.023	0.078	0.023	0.772
Behavior	0.508	0.064	0.508	0.000

The results of table 3 shows that teachers' attitude toward IE has a significant effect on positive climate aspect of teachers' emotional support. Aspects of teachers' attitude toward IE which have a significant effect on positive climate are conative / behavior ($B = 0.508, p < 0.05$). Meanwhile, cognitive aspects ($B = -0.088, p > 0.05$) and affective ($B = 0.023, p > 0.05$) did not significantly influence. The R (square) value of 25.8% shows that the proportion of positive climate variance can be explained by teachers' attitude toward IE.

TABLE IV. TEACHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD IE AND TEACHER'S SENSITIVITY

Variable	B	SE B	β	p
Constant	26.675	5.020	-	0.000
Cognitive	-0.038	0.074	-0.038	0.604

Variable	B	SE B	β	p
Affective	-0.021	0.076	-0.021	0.786
Behavior	0.526	0.063	0.526	0.000

The results of table 4 shows that teachers' attitude toward IE has a significant effect on teacher's sensitivity aspect of teachers emotional support. Aspects of teachers' attitude toward IE which have a significant effect on teacher's sensitivity are conative / behavior ($B = 0.526, p < 0.05$). Meanwhile, cognitive aspects ($B = -0.038, p > 0.05$) and affective ($B = -0.021, p > 0.05$) did not significantly influence. The R (square) value of 28.4% shows that the proportion of teacher's sensitivity variance can be explained by teachers' attitude toward IE.

TABLE V. TEACHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD IE AND TEACHER CONSIDERS THE STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Variable	B	SE B	B	p
Constant	26.314	5.246	-	0.000
Cognitive	0.010	0.077	0.010	0.896
Affective	-0.003	0.080	-0.003	0.974
Behavior	0.466	0.066	0.466	0.000

The results of table 5 shows that teachers' attitude toward IE has a significant effect on teacher considers the student's perspective aspect of teacher's emotional support. Aspects of teachers' attitude toward IE which has a significant effect on teacher considers the student's perspective are conative / behavior ($B = 0.466, p < 0.05$). Meanwhile, cognitive aspects ($B = 0.010, p > 0.05$) and affective ($B = -0.003, p > 0.05$) did not significantly influence. The R (square) value of 21.8% shows that the proportion of teacher considers the student's perspective variance can be explained by teachers' attitude toward IE.

B. Discussion

This study shows that teacher attitudes towards IE significantly influence the teacher's emotional support in the behavioral aspects of attitudes. This can be interpreted that the desire of the preschool teacher to take action in the IE setting has an influence on the emotional support that the preschool teacher gives to students with SEN. This is in line with the research conducted by [22], who conducted a study of the relationship between teacher attitudes towards IE and emotional support for elementary level teachers. In this study it was shown that the behavioral aspects of attitudes have a significant influence on emotional support. According to [24] in the learning process in the classroom, teachers will focus more on delivering and completing teaching materials with very limited time. Especially learning time at the preschool level is very short. Thus the preschool teacher chooses to keep taking action in their responsibility, and can be said to override the feelings they feel. Furthermore, it might be

related to the limitations of this study. The researchers spread the measuring instruments mostly online via Google form and mostly offline by entrusting questionnaires through the principals. This caused the researcher to be unable to ascertain the seriousness of the participants in filling out the questionnaire and their understanding of the questionnaire items. Some studies show that school, class, and teaching factors provided by teachers can influence the form of teacher and student interaction. Likewise, the comparison between the number of students and teachers who teach in one class at school [25] affects the interaction between teachers and students, specifically the emotional support that the teacher gives. In this study, demographic factors regarding the form of teaching and the number of students in the class were not considered so that this did not appear.

The results also showed that there was a significant effect between the behavioral aspects of the teacher's attitude towards IE and the three aspects of the teacher's emotional support, namely positive climate, teacher's sensitivity, and the teacher's view of the student's perspective. This can be interpreted that the greater the teacher's willingness to accommodate the needs of students, the greater the emotional support the teacher gives to students in inclusive classes. This is explained in the theory of planned behavior [18] which states that when a person has a willingness to do an action, then with the availability it will make it easier for someone to take an action. In this case, when teachers have a willingness to accommodate the needs of students with SEN, the teacher will find it easier to provide emotional support to students with SEN, such as creating a comfortable and pleasant atmosphere for students, giving attention to students, and giving students the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study shows that teacher attitudes towards IE significantly influence the teacher's emotional support in the behavioral aspects of attitudes. The results also show that there was a significant effect between the behavioral aspect of the teacher's attitude towards IE and the three aspects of the teacher's emotional support, namely positive climate, teacher's sensitivity, and the teacher's view of the student's perspective. The results of this study indicate that aspects of behavior in teacher attitudes are aspects that must be considered and improved in the context of inclusive education in Indonesia. In addition, these aspects can be the basis for making training materials or interventions for preschool teachers in IE.

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