



Hambatan Pendidikan Inklusif: Menelusuri Akar Permasalahan Implementasi di Indonesia

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor penghambat dalam implementasi pendidikan inklusif di Indonesia. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi literatur dan didukung oleh hasil wawancara, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa terdapat lima faktor utama yang menghambat efektivitas pendidikan inklusif: (1) keterbatasan kompetensi guru dan tenaga kependidikan, (2) minimnya infrastruktur dan fasilitas pendukung, (3) sikap masyarakat dan stigma sosial terhadap anak berkebutuhan khusus (ABK), (4) ketidaksiapan institusi pendidikan, dan (5) kesenjangan ekonomi serta distribusi sekolah inklusi yang tidak merata. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan pendidikan inklusif sangat bergantung pada sinergi antara kebijakan, kesiapan institusi, dan perubahan sikap sosial. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan perlunya pelatihan guru yang berkelanjutan, peningkatan infrastruktur pendidikan, serta kampanye kesadaran publik guna mendukung sistem pendidikan yang lebih inklusif di masa depan.

Kata Kunci: anak berkebutuhan khusus, pendidikan inklusif, fasilitas pendidikan, kebijakan pendidikan, stigma sosial

Barriers to Inclusion: Exploring the Root Causes of Inclusive Education Challenges in Indonesia

Abstract: This study aims to identify the inhibiting factors in the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia. Using a qualitative approach through literature review and supported by interviews, the research reveals five key barriers affecting the effectiveness of inclusive education: (1) limited teacher competence and educational personnel, (2) insufficient infrastructure and support facilities, (3) social stigma and negative public attitudes towards children with special needs (CWSN), (4) institutional unpreparedness, and (5) socioeconomic inequality and uneven distribution of inclusive schools. The findings highlight that the success of inclusive education depends on synergy between policies, institutional readiness, and societal attitude shifts. The study recommends continuous teacher training, improved educational infrastructure, and public awareness campaigns to support a more inclusive education system in the future.

Keywords: children with special needs, inclusive education, educational facilities, education policy, social stigma

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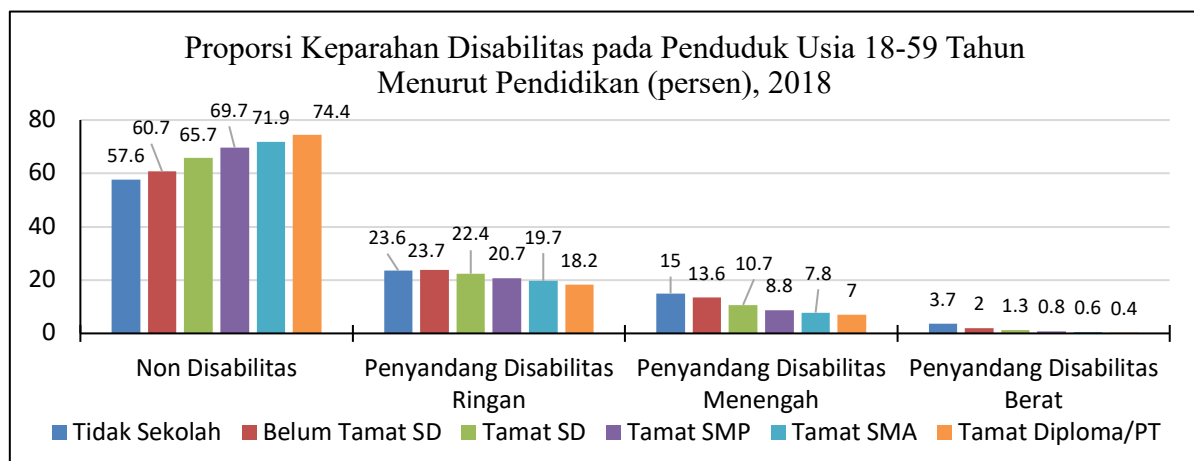


INTRODUCTION

The strengthening of the education sector is a critical priority in achieving the vision and mission of national development. Consequently, the agenda of ensuring equitable access to education for all societal groups has become a significant concern for policymakers. This implies that the government is obligated to uphold the right of every individual to receive proper education and instruction, irrespective of physical disabilities, ethnic backgrounds, religious affiliations, linguistic differences, or cultural diversity. This commitment is aligned with the national objective of educating the nation, as enshrined in the fourth paragraph of the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

Beyond national mandates, the pursuit of educational equity is also integral to the global agenda for sustainable development, articulated through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Within this framework, governments are expected to provide inclusive and equitable quality education for all, particularly for vulnerable populations. As a demonstration of its commitment to educational equity, the Indonesian government has enacted several policies targeting the education of children with special needs. Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, particularly Article 5, Paragraph 1, stipulates that “every citizen has the right to access quality education.” This legal provision serves as a strong foundation for expanding learning opportunities for children with special needs (CWSN). It underscores their right to quality education that enables them to cultivate their potential. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that children with special needs possess unique talents and capabilities that warrant recognition and development.

Despite the existence of a strong legal foundation, in reality, children with special needs still face significant challenges in finding appropriate avenues to develop their talents. Children with special needs, also referred to as children with special needs, are often marginalized in terms of access to education and other public facilities. In this regard Oktaviani & Setiyono (2023) reported that the number of children with special needs in Indonesia reached 1.544.184 (aged 5–18 years), yet only 85.737 of them were enrolled in formal education. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), specifically the *People’s Welfare Indicators* (Budiaty et al., n.d.) and the *National Riskesdas Report* (Tim Riskedas, 2018), approximately 3.3% of children aged 5 to 17 years in Indonesia are living with disabilities. These reports also emphasize that children with special needs tend to encounter considerable obstacles in accessing education.



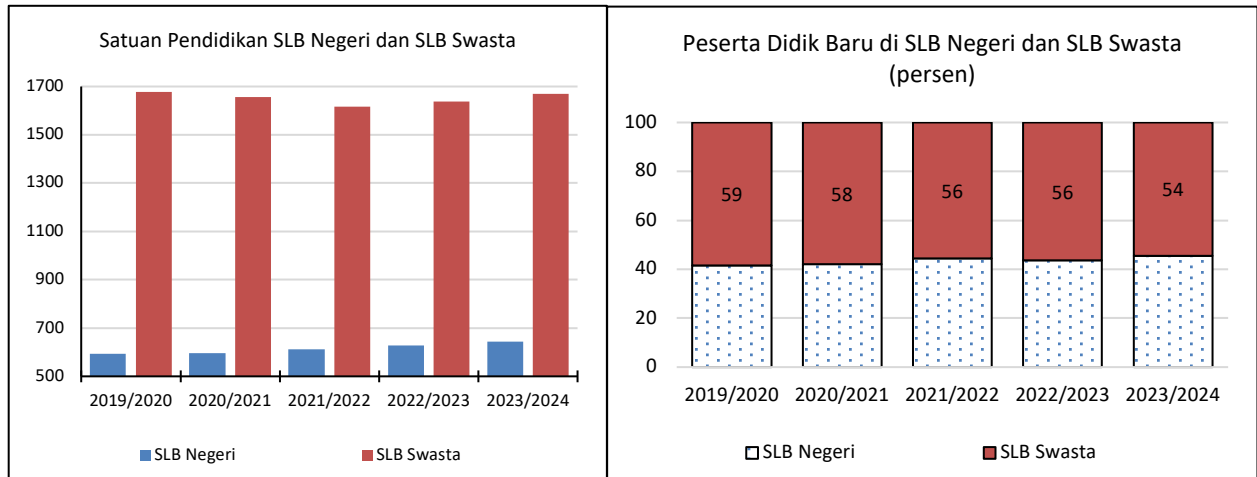
Source: People’s Welfare Indicators (2020) and National Riskesdas Report (2018)

Figure 1. Proportion of Persons with Disabilities in Accessing Education

Figure 1 illustrates the educational access of persons with disabilities. The figure indicates that the more severe the level of disability, the lower the level of education completed. Moreover, there is a stark disparity between non-disabled and disabled groups. The former group has a significantly greater likelihood of attaining higher education compared to the latter. Alarming, individuals with disabilities are overrepresented at the lowest educational levels—many have not completed primary school, and some have never attended school at all. This condition should serve as a critical consideration for policymakers to promote and facilitate educational access for people with disabilities. Raising awareness

of this issue is essential to ensuring that individuals with disabilities can achieve a more decent and independent life.

In principle, the government has sought to accommodate the education of children with special needs by establishing special education schools, known as *Sekolah Luar Biasa* (SLB). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of public SLBs remains questionable. Figure 2 presents a comparison between public and private SLBs in Indonesia. The data reveal that private SLBs are significantly more in demand than public ones. Year after year, newly enrolled students appear to prefer private SLBs over public institutions. This trend is concerning, as private SLBs generally charge higher tuition fees than public SLBs. Consequently, this situation calls for critical evaluation by the government to enhance the quality and accessibility of public SLBs.



Source: Special Needs School Statistics (Tim BPS, 2024)

Figure 2. A Portrait of a Special Needs School in Indonesia

Despite the suboptimal performance of public special education schools (SLBs), the government has introduced an alternative approach to promote educational equity for children with special needs. Rooted in the principle of equal access to education and the need for curriculum parity between children with and without disabilities, the government has implemented a policy promoting inclusive education. This initiative is reinforced by Regulation of the Minister of National Education (Permendiknas) No. 70 of 2009 concerning Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities and Those with Special Intelligence and/or Talent. The inclusive education policy is a continuation of the integrated education program introduced by the Indonesian government in the 1980s, which, however, experienced limited development. It was not until the 2000s that inclusive education began to re-emerge, aligning with global educational trends and adopting inclusive education concepts. By 2008, Indonesia had established approximately 814 inclusive schools distributed across several regions (Irvan & Jauhari, 2018).

According to the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture, as compiled by Arriani et al (2022), there are two main objectives for the establishment of inclusive schools. First, inclusive schools aim to provide comprehensive access to quality education for all students with physical, emotional, mental, and social disabilities, including those with special intelligence and/or talents, in accordance with their individual needs and capacities. Second, inclusive education seeks to promote a learning environment that respects diversity and does not discriminate against any student. Inclusion is closely associated with children with special needs and children with special needs (Ratriani, 2024). The implementation of inclusive schools must also be adapted to the capacities of the learners. Inclusive education can serve as an effective platform for gifted education (Suherman, 2014). Teachers bear a significant responsibility to identify gifted children and to design efficient curricula that meet their needs (Kaya, 2023). Inclusive schools represent a major initiative by the government to realize equitable education opportunities, including for children with special needs, without exception. The implementation of inclusive education must take into account the following aspects: (1) school readiness, (2) student management, (3) curriculum management, (4) teacher management, (5) facilities and infrastructure management, and (6) public relations management (Baharuddin & Saidang, 2020). However, in practice, many schools still lack a clear understanding of the concepts, implementation

methods, and strategies required for inclusive education (Nugraha, 2020).

The implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia is still confronted with several issues and challenges. One of the problems faced is that, despite the quantitative increase in the number of inclusive schools, there are still children with special needs who are not enrolled in school. Although the principle of equality for all children worldwide has been established, people with disabilities continue to experience discrimination (Pappas et al., 2018). Several factors contribute to the challenges in accessibility to education for children with special needs, including: parents' perceptions of children with special needs and their difficulties in supporting them, general public attitudes, government officials, school staff, and inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training for educators, the invisibility of disabilities within communities, poverty, lack of societal acceptance, low levels of interest, gender discrimination, lack of awareness, inadequate physical access, limited availability of various support systems, and government policies that focus specifically on the education of children with special needs (Limaye, 2016). These factors indicate the uneven access to education for children with special needs. Based on the background outlined, this study focuses on the factors that hinder the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia.

METHOD

To explore the factors that hinder the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia, this study adopts a qualitative research approach in the form of a comprehensive literature review. Data collection is carried out through library research, which involves the systematic reading, analysis, and documentation of information relevant to the topic. The sources include academic journals and articles addressing related issues, as well as official reports from institutions such as Statistics Indonesia (BPS), the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. In total, 28 papers were analyzed to identify recurring themes, challenges, and best practices. Furthermore, the study incorporates a limited number of interviews with children with special needs and relevant stakeholders who were accessible during the research period. The research strategy is guided by best practices, drawing upon successful models from countries that have effectively developed inclusive education systems for children with special needs. These methods are carefully adapted to suit the unique social, cultural, and institutional context of inclusive education in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Inclusive education is an integral part of the nation's efforts to ensure the right of every citizen to access quality education without discrimination, as mandated by the 1945 Constitution and the National Education System Law (Law No. 20 of 2003). Although the normative framework for inclusive education policy has been established in Indonesia, its implementation on the ground still faces various challenges. Based on the literature review and supporting data analyzed, several hindering factors have a tangible impact on the effectiveness of inclusive education delivery, from policy, institutional, socio-cultural, and economic perspectives. The following discussion will systematically elaborate on these factors to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of inclusive education implementation in Indonesia.

Teacher and Educational Staff Competency Limitations

One of the crucial factors hindering the successful implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia is the low competency of teachers in handling students with special needs. Teachers are at the forefront of inclusive education implementation; however, many of them have not received adequate training related to inclusive pedagogy, adaptive assessment, and individualized learning strategies. This directly impacts the quality of services provided to children with special needs (CWSN) in regular classrooms. According to a report by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud, 2020), only about 24% of teachers in inclusive schools have undergone specialized training in inclusive education. Meanwhile, data from the Directorate of Teachers and Educational Personnel for Primary Education show that of more than 400,000 primary school teachers in Indonesia, only about 8% have experience or training in teaching CWSN. This figure reflects the limited professional capacity of teachers in accommodating diverse learning needs in the classroom.

The lack of training is further exacerbated by the absence of adequate support services, such as special education assistants (GPK) or interdisciplinary experts (e.g., psychologists, speech therapists, etc.)

in many inclusive schools. Several studies have also shown that teachers often feel insecure or even reluctant to accept CWSN in their classrooms due to a lack of knowledge and skills (Nugraha, 2020; Ratriani, 2024). This creates a non-inclusive learning environment and can hinder both the academic and social development of students. In the international context, UNESCO (2020) also emphasizes that teacher quality is a key determinant of the success of inclusive education. Countries that have effectively implemented inclusive education systems, such as Finland and Canada, prioritize teacher training, including continuous professional development in areas like differentiated instruction and psychosocial support for children with special needs. Therefore, enhancing teacher competencies is a fundamental prerequisite for fostering effective inclusive education implementation. Systematic training based on real field needs, supported by inclusive teacher education curricula, is a strategic step that must be strengthened by the government and higher education institutions.

Limited Infrastructure and Support Facilities

The availability of disability-friendly infrastructure is a fundamental prerequisite in creating an inclusive learning environment. However, the reality is that most inclusive schools in Indonesia still face challenges in providing adequate physical facilities and assistive devices to support the learning process for children with special needs (CWSN). Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud, 2021) shows that of more than 12.000 inclusive schools in Indonesia, only about 38% have physical facilities that meet accessibility standards for people with disabilities. Facilities such as ramps, handrails, accessible toilets, and classrooms that accommodate wheelchair users are still not evenly available. This is further supported by a report from UNICEF Indonesia (2020), which states that less than 50% of schools in Indonesia have toilets accessible to students with disabilities, and only a few schools have wheelchair ramps or specialized teaching aids.

A study by Darmawati and Herawati (2020), conducted in several inclusive schools in Sleman Regency, showed that more than 60% of schools lack basic facilities such as ramps and accessible toilets, and do not have learning aids such as communication boards, braille books, or hearing aids. The study also revealed that most teachers and school principals stated that limited funding was the primary barrier to providing these facilities. In addition to physical aspects, the lack of learning aids also poses a significant challenge. Wahyuni and Sari (2019), in their study, stated that visually impaired and hearing-impaired students faced difficulties in understanding the material due to the unavailability of appropriate learning media to meet their needs. As a result, many CWSN fall behind academically, even though they are part of the formal education system. A similar finding was highlighted in a study by Astuti and Yuniarti (2021), which focused on the disparity between schools' status as inclusive institutions and the reality on the ground. They found that many schools only held the status of inclusion administratively, but lacked the necessary facilities and support staff, leading to a situation where inclusion was merely symbolic. This condition shows a gap between policy and implementation. Although regulations have mandated the provision of supportive facilities, without adequate oversight and budget allocation, the inclusion that is expected becomes nothing more than rhetoric. A more systematic intervention from the government is required to ensure that every inclusive school truly meets accessibility standards and is suitable for all students.

Social Attitudes and Stigma towards Children with Special Needs

One of the fundamental challenges in the implementation of inclusive education is the persistent social stigma towards children with special needs (CWSN), both within schools, families, and the broader society. This stigma arises from negative views, prejudices, and stereotypes that regard CWSN as individuals who are incapable of learning like other children, and as a "burden" in the regular educational process. As a result, CWSN often experience discrimination, rejection, and even social isolation, which ultimately hinders their active participation in the inclusive education system. On a national level, research by Sukadari (2020) shows that negative societal attitudes towards CWSN remain a major barrier to their acceptance in regular schools. The study found that many parents of regular students were concerned that the presence of CWSN would disrupt their children's learning process. Some teachers also showed resistance, feeling they lacked the capacity to handle students with special needs. This subtle rejection from the school environment creates an atmosphere that is not conducive to the development of CWSN.

The stigma against CWSN is also exacerbated by the lack of public literacy regarding the rights of people with disabilities. Fauziah (2021) noted that the majority of the Indonesian public still does not understand the principles of inclusive education as a fundamental right, rather than just a policy choice.

In this context, inclusive education is still viewed as an act of "kindness," rather than an obligation for the state and society to ensure equal access for all citizens. Internationally, the issue of stigma and discrimination against CWSN is also a major concern. According to Pappas et al. (2018) in their study in the United States, negative stereotypes towards children with special needs have become a systemic barrier that impedes efforts to integrate inclusive education. They revealed that negative attitudes from peers, teachers, and even the parents of other students can create a learning environment that is unfriendly and marginalizes CWSN both socially and emotionally. This study also emphasizes the importance of inclusive education that focuses not only on facilities but also on changing the school culture and society at large.

UNESCO (2020), through the Global Education Monitoring Report, also highlighted that discriminatory attitudes and prejudices against children with special needs are significant barriers to achieving global inclusive education targets. The report states that although inclusive policies have been adopted in various countries, unsupportive social attitudes remain the primary obstacle in practice. In the context of developing countries like Indonesia, changing the social paradigm is crucial for ensuring that inclusion is not just a policy but is truly realized in everyday practice. At the family level, Anjani and Taufik (2022) found that many parents of CWSN feel ashamed or reluctant to show their child's condition to the public due to social pressure and fear of discrimination. This leads to delays in accessing educational services and early intervention for these children. The feelings of shame and social isolation experienced by families of CWSN contribute to the cycle of social exclusion that continues to repeat. Efforts to eliminate the stigma against CWSN need to start with continuous public education, teacher training on inclusive values, and the active involvement of the media in shaping a positive image of children with special needs. Norwich (2013) stated that the success of inclusive education is determined by how much society can see differences not as barriers, but as part of human diversity that must be valued. Therefore, changing societal attitudes towards CWSN is not only the responsibility of schools or the government but also the collective responsibility of all members of society. Without a shift in the social paradigm, inclusive education policies will continue to face challenges in their implementation at the grassroots level.

Unpreparedness of Educational Institutions in Implementing Inclusive Education

The implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia faces various challenges, one of which is the unpreparedness of educational institutions. Although inclusive education policies have been established, the reality is that many schools are not adequately prepared to effectively implement inclusive education. This lack of preparedness is evident in several key aspects, including school management, curriculum, teacher training, and the availability of facilities to support the learning of children with special needs (CWSN). One of the most prominent aspects of this unpreparedness is school management. Many school principals and education managers lack a sufficient understanding of the principles of inclusive education. As a result, they often follow government policies without ensuring these policies are properly implemented at the school level. Research by Baharuddin and Saidang (2020) indicates that in some schools, the education management system is not prepared to support inclusive education. The lack of comprehensive understanding of inclusive education concepts within school management leads to gaps in the implementation of inclusive education policies, where CWSN are admitted but without the systems necessary to integrate them fully into the learning process.

Moreover, the development of a curriculum that responds to the individual needs of students presents a significant challenge. Although the existing curriculum in Indonesia includes standards for inclusive education, many schools struggle to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of CWSN. Nugraha (2020) states that many teachers are unable to develop a differentiated curriculum—one that adjusts learning to suit the abilities and needs of each student. As a result, CWSN, who should receive special attention, often fall behind in the learning process because the materials taught are not adapted to their abilities. Additionally, teacher training is a major issue. Many teachers have not received adequate training on how to teach CWSN in the classroom. Limaye (2016) found in his study in India that although many teachers are committed to inclusive education, they often lack training in early detection of student needs, as well as in designing and adapting instructional materials suitable for CWSN. Teachers without these skills often struggle to provide the necessary support, leading to limited participation of CWSN in the learning process.

In addition to teacher training, adequate facilities and infrastructure are also crucial for the success of inclusive education. Sharma et al. (2018) in their study in India note that many schools lack sufficient facilities for supporting CWSN, such as ramps, lifts, and special toilets for students with

physical disabilities. Without adequate physical accessibility, CWSN face difficulties in moving around and interacting within the school environment. Research by Agran et al. (2018) in the United States also highlights that many schools lack assistive learning tools, such as devices for students with visual or hearing impairments. These limitations in facilities and infrastructure are among the biggest barriers preventing CWSN from actively participating in learning activities. In other countries, similar challenges are encountered. Sharma et al. (2018) found in Australia that even in developed countries, schools face difficulties in adapting the curriculum for CWSN. Despite the implementation of inclusive education policies, these policies are often limited to schools with more resources, while other schools struggle to adapt learning materials and provide appropriate teacher training. This illustrates that the readiness of educational institutions is a global challenge, even where inclusive education policies are in place.

Furthermore, Pappas et al. (2018) in Europe also point out that institutions unprepared to support CWSN often fail in their implementation of inclusive education. They found that school administrators frequently lack training in inclusive education management, leading to insufficient support for CWSN. This shows that in many countries, the challenges of inclusive education are not just about the policies in place, but also about the readiness of educational institutions to accommodate the needs of CWSN. In conclusion, the unpreparedness of educational institutions to support inclusive education requires comprehensive reform. This includes improving school management to better support the implementation of inclusive policies, developing a more flexible curriculum that responds to the needs of CWSN, and enhancing teacher and educator training. Furthermore, improving disability-friendly facilities and infrastructure is essential to creating an inclusive learning environment. Without comprehensive, integrated efforts, inclusive education in Indonesia will not be optimally realized, and CWSN will struggle to secure their right to an equal education.

Economic and Social Disparities in the Implementation of Inclusive Education

One of the major challenges hindering the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia is economic and social disparity. Economic factors play a crucial role in accessing inclusive education services, particularly for families with children with special needs (CWSN) from lower-middle-income backgrounds. Research has shown that many CWSN families lack the financial capacity to meet the additional needs required to support their children's education, such as specialized transportation, assistive learning devices, or therapeutic services. This financial constraint directly affects the active participation of CWSN in education, as they often face difficulties in accessing the available resources. Budiati et al. (n.d.) found that families of CWSN from lower socioeconomic backgrounds frequently struggle to afford the extra costs associated with their children's education, including specialized transportation, assistive learning tools, and therapy services. This condition leads to unequal access to inclusive education, where children from underprivileged families are often unable to fully benefit from inclusive learning, despite the technical availability of facilities in schools.

This issue is also evident in learning processes that require specialized assistive devices, such as technology for students with visual or hearing impairments. According to Agran et al. (2018), educational assistive tools for CWSN, such as devices enabling students with visual or hearing impairments to follow lessons, are not always available in schools with limited funding. Without access to such devices, CWSN are more likely to struggle in regular classrooms and lag behind their peers. Beyond physical tools, social disparities also influence the extent of attention and support CWSN receive at school and within the community. Pappas et al. (2018) reported that social stigma toward CWSN, especially among communities with limited understanding of disabilities, often worsens their situation. In some areas with low levels of education, negative perceptions of CWSN persist strongly, affecting the engagement of families and communities in supporting inclusive education. Children from impoverished or less-educated families are especially vulnerable to this stigma, leading to social isolation and reduced educational opportunities.

This condition also reflects a lack of educational literacy among parents, many of whom are unaware of their children's educational rights, particularly those with disabilities. Limaye (2016) emphasized that low levels of parental educational literacy can significantly reduce the participation of children with special needs in formal education. Parents who do not understand the importance of inclusive education or who are unaware of how to support their children's learning process may hinder their access to quality education. Beyond Indonesia, similar challenges are encountered in other countries. Sharma et al. (2018), in a study conducted in India, found that many families with CWSN were unable to access inclusive education services due to financial constraints. They noted that schools in rural areas often lack the facilities and funding needed to provide equal educational opportunities for CWSN,

resulting in many children being unable to attend school. Similarly, Sharma & Sood (2015) in Nepal found that differences in socioeconomic status among families significantly affected their ability to access inclusive education, with low-income families facing greater barriers in obtaining services that meet their children's educational needs.

In the global context, Sifuna (2012) also highlighted that economic and social disparities significantly influence the implementation of inclusive education, particularly in developing countries. A lack of funding to improve school facilities and provide necessary assistive devices often hampers the success of inclusive education. For example, in several developing countries, CWSN are frequently separated from regular students due to inadequate facilities and schools' unpreparedness to adapt the curriculum and resources required for inclusive education. These disparities suggest that achieving effective inclusive education requires governments to make greater efforts to reduce existing social and economic inequalities. Access to inclusive education must be ensured not only through policies but also through concrete efforts to guarantee that CWSN, especially those from low-income families, have equal opportunities to receive quality education. Furthermore, initiatives to enhance parental and community educational literacy are essential so that they can support their children's learning process more effectively. Overall, the economic and social gaps that hinder access to inclusive education must become a key focus in the formulation of educational policy, both in Indonesia and globally. Adequate funding, parent training programs, and efforts to reduce social stigma against CWSN are necessary to create a more inclusive learning environment for children around the world.

Uneven Distribution of Inclusive Schools

One of the major challenges in the implementation of inclusive education is the unequal distribution of inclusive schools between urban and rural areas. In Indonesia, although inclusive education policies have been introduced for several years, the reality on the ground shows that schools capable of providing adequate inclusive education services are mostly concentrated in major cities. In contrast, rural and remote areas often struggle to access inclusive education due to limited infrastructure, facilities, and resources. In urban areas, schools generally have better access to supporting resources for inclusive education, such as disability-friendly facilities, specialized educational tools, and trained teaching staff. However, in many rural regions, the necessary facilities and support systems are extremely limited. This issue is reflected in a study by Yusuf (2018), which found that although inclusive education policies have been implemented nationally, rural areas often lack sufficient resources to provide optimal inclusive education. Many schools in these regions still lack basic facilities such as wheelchair-accessible ramps or special toilets for children with special needs. Similarly, Sharma et al. (2018), in their study in India, revealed that children with special needs living in rural areas often cannot access adequate inclusive education. The study highlights that the lack of specialized teacher training, limited assistive educational devices, and insufficient physical infrastructure in rural schools pose major obstacles for children with special needs to obtain an education equal to that of their non-disabled peers.

Globally, UNICEF (2018) also notes that the uneven distribution of inclusive schools is a common issue faced by many countries, particularly in developing nations. In these contexts, although inclusive policies may exist at the national level, there remains a stark gap in the provision of resources and infrastructure between urban and rural areas. Ainscow (2016) emphasizes that inclusive education must be recognized as a right for all children; however, achieving this right requires an equitable distribution of inclusive schools and more just allocation of resources.

This inequality often exacerbates the vulnerability of children with special needs, particularly in more remote regions. They frequently lack access to essential support services, such as physical therapy or psychological assistance, which are more commonly available in urban schools. Miles and Singal (2010), in their research in the United Kingdom, assert that the success of inclusive education heavily depends on the fair distribution of resources, including supporting infrastructure, teacher training, and student support systems. Without equitable distribution, children with special needs in rural areas are often denied the same educational opportunities as those in urban settings.

In Indonesia, Baharuddin & Saidang (2020) also highlight this issue. They note that despite the introduction of inclusive education policies, achieving equitable and widespread implementation remains challenging. Many schools in rural areas lack sufficient budgets and facilities to support children with special needs. In other words, although inclusive schools do exist, their numbers are very limited and their distribution is uneven, forcing many children with special needs in these areas to settle for inadequate education. A study by Mubita (2015) in Zambia similarly shows that in many developing countries, inclusive education is rarely available in rural areas, even where national inclusive policies are

in place. Schools in rural Zambia, for example, often lack access to basic facilities required to support the education of children with special needs, such as adequately sized classrooms or teacher training. The same can be observed in many rural areas of Indonesia, where children with special needs frequently do not receive the educational services they are entitled to.

The Global Partnership for Education (2020) also underscores that although many countries have committed to providing inclusive education for all children, significant barriers remain in ensuring equal access between urban and rural areas. Achieving equitable inclusive education requires special attention to underdeveloped regions, including fair distribution of funding, facilities, and teacher training. The uneven distribution of inclusive schools creates inequality in educational access for children with special needs living in urban versus rural areas. Although inclusive education policies have been adopted in many countries, including Indonesia, significant gaps remain in terms of resource provision and infrastructure in rural regions. To address this, governments and educational institutions must work toward a more equitable distribution of inclusive education facilities across all regions, including remote and underserved areas.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review and data analysis, it can be concluded that inclusive education in Indonesia faces a range of complex structural and social challenges. Five key inhibiting factors have been identified: low teacher competence, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, persistent social stigma against children with special needs, institutional unpreparedness in terms of management and curriculum, and the unequal distribution of inclusive schools. Achieving truly inclusive education requires comprehensive policy interventions, enhanced capacity-building for educators, sufficient budget allocations, and a societal paradigm shift toward embracing diversity. With strategic and collaborative efforts, inclusive education in Indonesia can be implemented more effectively and equitably.

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