

Students' Perspectives on Inclusive Education in Indonesia: Insights from a Systematic Literature Review

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Abstrak

Penerapan pendidikan inklusif di Indonesia menunjukkan kecenderungan ke arah hasil yang baik dalam memberikan layanan pendidikan yang lebih berkualitas bagi anak berkebutuhan khusus. Implementasi pendidikan inklusi di Indonesia perlu mempertimbangkan perspektif siswa sebagai pendekatan dalam meningkatkan efektivitas dan pengembangan pendidikan inklusi. Oleh karena itu, tinjauan literatur dengan pedoman PRISMA bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi studi empiris yang relevan dengan perspektif siswa terhadap pendidikan inklusi di Indonesia. Publikasi yang dipilih adalah artikel jurnal atau prosiding konferensi yang terindeks Scopus. Database Scopus dan ERIC menghasilkan lima studi yang relevan dengan tujuan penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa dengan dan tanpa kebutuhan khusus memiliki perspektif positif dan negatif terhadap pendidikan inklusi. Dari perspektif positif, siswa menemukan adanya dukungan dari guru dan teman sebaya, rasa kebersamaan, pertemanan, dan determinasi diri. Dari perspektif negatif, siswa melihat adanya tantangan akademik, isolasi sosial, stigmatisasi, dan perundungan di dalam sekolah inklusi. Penulis merekomendasikan penelitian longitudinal atau komparatif lebih lanjut dengan populasi siswa berkebutuhan khusus yang lebih luas dan beragam untuk memahami perspektif siswa secara komprehensif.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Inklusi, Perspektif Siswa, Siswa Berkebutuhan Khusus

Abstract

The implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia indicates a tendency toward favourable outcomes in providing better quality educational services for children with special needs. In order to enhance the efficacy and advancement of inclusive education in Indonesia, it is crucial to consider the perspectives of students towards inclusive education. Hence, this PRISMA-compliant literature review examines relevant studies on Indonesian students' perspectives on inclusive education. The chosen publication is a Scopus-indexed journal article or conference proceeding on empirical research. The Scopus and ERIC databases yielded five relevant studies. Findings showed that students with and without special needs have positive and negative perspectives. Positively, inclusive education students value teacher and peer support, a sense of belonging, friendship, and self-determination. Conversely, students' negative perspectives include academic challenges, social isolation, stigmatization, and bullying in inclusive schools. To fully understand student perspectives, the authors recommend further longitudinal or comparative research with a broader and more diverse population of students with special needs.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Students' Perspectives, Student with Special Needs

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States mandates a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for all children, including those with special needs. Indonesia has established regulatory frameworks for inclusive education over the past two decades, ratifying the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Inclusive education is a comprehensive approach to education that addresses individual learning needs by providing adequate support and removing barriers to participation for all students (Efendi et al., 2022; Paul et al., 2022; Sowiyah & Perdana, 2022). The implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia indicates a tendency toward favourable outcomes in providing better quality educational services for children with special needs. However, inclusive education in Indonesia continues to face multiple challenges, as shown by the persistent gap between the policy objectives and the actual experiences of students (Rante et al., 2020; Sowiyah & Perdana, 2022). Multiple challenges, including a lack

of resources, inadequate teacher training, gaps in policy implementation, and societal attitudes towards disabilities, hinder the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia (Komarudin & Kaeni, 2023; Kurniawan, 2020; Kurniawati, 2021).

Effective implementation of inclusive education demands the support, collaboration, and active participation of numerous stakeholders, such as parents, school administrators, educators, and the wider community (Andini et al., 2020; Ummah et al., 2022; Yasin et al., 2023). The educational community's perspectives and beliefs contribute to the implementation of inclusive education. Significantly, the student's perspective plays a vital role in the successful implementation of inclusive education (Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., 2022; Srivastava, 2023). The students' perspective on inclusive education provides valuable insights and recommendations for researchers and practitioners. Daily reflective practice in schools should incorporate student input rather than treat it as a tokenistic repetition of democratic processes (Hummerstone & Parsons, 2021; Jones & Hall, 2022; Leeuw et al., 2020). Involving students in decision-making about their education is good practice for inclusion.

The viewpoints of students towards inclusive education exhibit a wide range of perspectives that are both varied and insightful. Their perspectives on inclusive education could be positive or negative, depending on their own experiences. Teacher attitudes can influence the perspectives of students without special needs towards inclusive education (Heyder et al., 2020; Sandoval et al., 2020). Conversely, the attitudes of teachers and contextual factors like the quality of inclusive practices in schools and the availability of supportive resources may influence the perspectives of students with special needs. Understanding the viewpoints of students will provide valuable insights into the challenges they face, the support they require, and their overall perceptions of the inclusive education environment (DeMatthews et al., 2020; Lindner et al., 2022).

However, research on students' experiences and perspectives of inclusive education has not been extensive (Kleeberg-Niepage et al., 2022; Little et al., 2022). In the Indonesian context, researchers often overlook students' perspectives on inclusive education, focusing primarily on teachers' perspectives. Current efforts to incorporate students' perspectives mostly consist of non-intensive involvement in the forms of expression, consultation, and just partial participation. This gap in the literature is significant, as understanding students' perspectives is vital to creating a comprehensive yet effective framework for inclusive education that genuinely adheres to students' distinct needs and aspirations (Diana et al., 2020; Ediyanto et al., 2021; Faulkner et al., 2021). The growing number of inclusive schools in Indonesia further underscores the urgency of this research. The Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture (*Kemenko PMK*) reported that as of September 2023, the total number of schools that provide inclusive education had reached 44,477. This represents a significant increase from the previous figure of 30,982, according to *Data Pokok Pendidikan (Dapodik)* statistics as of December 2022 (Mangiaracina et al., 2021).

This study fills a critical gap in the literature by conducting a systematic literature review (SLR) focusing on students' perspectives on inclusive education in Indonesia. By synthesising insights from the previous studies, the novelty of this study provides evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, educators, and researchers to enhance the implementation of inclusive education practices. Focusing on student experiences and concerns will lead to a welcoming and inclusive classroom. The aim of this study examines relevant studies on Indonesian students' perspectives on inclusive education. The findings of this study will contribute to the broader discourse on inclusive education and inform future research and policy development.

2. METHODS

We conducted this research using the SLR method to identify and evaluate existing studies about students' perspectives on inclusive education. SLR offers a thorough and inclusive examination of the existing studies pertaining to the proposed research question (Caldwell & Bennett, 2020; R. I. Williams et al., 2021). For policymakers, educators, and researchers to make informed educational decisions for students, empirical knowledge from evaluating previous studies is crucial. In this investigation, the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) flowchart was used to select articles relevant to the proposed research question (Cumming et al., 2023; Page et al., 2022). In the context of our review, we formulated the following research question: What are the perspectives of students with and without special needs towards inclusive education in Indonesia? The current SLR study included five essential aspects for the retrieved articles: search strategy, selection criteria, selection process, data collection, and data analysis.

The data collection process involved conducting a systematic search using two electronic databases namely Scopus and the Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) to identify relevant articles. The search strategy consisted of formulating keywords and the Boolean operators "AND" and "OR" which allowed obtaining the following products: "student" AND "perception" OR "perspective" OR "voice" AND "inclusive education". Next, the query was entered in the Scopus and ERIC databases, and various filters were applied to refine the results, as seen in Table 1. Using the keywords, the articles displayed in the database relate to inclusive education perspectives.

Table 1. Article Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Year of publication	2019-2023	Publication before 2019
Location	Indonesia	Other country
Language	English	Non – English
Type of study	Empirical study	Non – empirical study
Type of reference	Journal articles or proceeding	Theses, books
Indexing	Scopus	Not indexed by Scopus
Perspective	Student	Parent, teacher, headmaster

This study defined guidelines to facilitate literature research. Articles included in this review using English language and published between 2019 and 2023 to ensure the relevance of the studies. Chosen articles were empirical studies in the form of journal articles or proceeding indexed by Scopus to ensure the quality of the research. This review focuses on articles that feature student perspectives on inclusive education in Indonesia. We provide Table 1 to sum up seven specified selection criteria for accepting or rejecting journal articles.

The procedure for selecting articles for the SLR was carried out in August 2023. Among 21 articles, duplicate was removed, and 20 articles remained were screened by reading titles and abstracts. We excluded 14 articles and 6 articles remained were assessed using inclusion and exclusion criteria. We excluded 1 article and included 5 articles in this review. The flowchart presented in Figure 1 demonstrates the article selection process, which was originally adapted from the PRISMA flowchart.

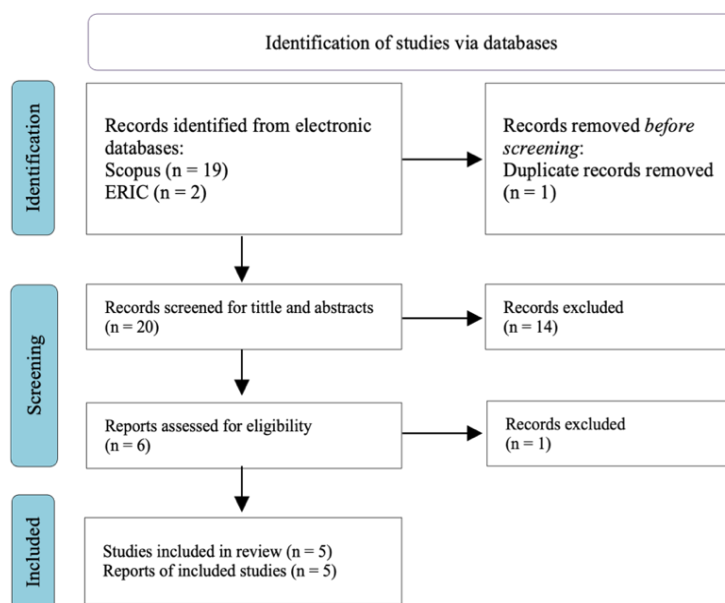


Figure 1. Flowchart of Article Selection Process

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

A total of five articles were reviewed using the thematic analysis approach. The data were obtained by reviewing the title and abstracts, followed by a comprehensive analysis of the entire article. A qualitative study was conducted to identify themes regarding students' perspectives on inclusion. Table 2 presents the papers that have met the criteria for inclusion in the synthesis process.

Tabel 2. List of Reviewed Research Articles

No	Study	Title
1.	(Bonati & Andriana, 2021)	Amplifying children's voices within photovoice: Emerging inclusive education practices in Indonesia
2.	(Yusuf et al., 2021)	Exploring The Views of Deaf Students about The Attitudes of Non-Deaf Students in Inclusive Schools
3.	(Andriana & Evans, 2021)	Voices of students with intellectual disabilities: Experiences of transition in “inclusive schools” in Indonesia
4.	(Amka & Mirnawati, 2020)	Social participation of deaf students within inclusive higher education
5.	(Little et al., 2022)	Social Inclusion through the Eyes of the Student: Perspectives from Students with Disabilities on Friendship and Acceptance

There are two research designs used, including a qualitative approach and a quantitative approach. Among the five articles examined in this study, four employed a qualitative approach, while one utilized a quantitative approach. For the quantitative approach, the previous study using interviews, questionnaires, and documentation in the survey of the social participation of the deaf students at the university (Amka & Mirnawati, 2020). For the qualitative approach, the existing study employed photovoice that aimed to investigate an understanding of the feelings and thoughts of students with learning disabilities

regarding social inclusion, communities, and a sense of belonging using group discussions and interviews (Bonati & Andriana, 2021). Photovoice is a qualitative research methodology that involves individuals using photographs to capture, represent, and communicate their own experiences and viewpoints on topics that are significant to them (Cantarero-Arévalo & Werremeyer, 2021; Reyes-Foster & DeNoyelles, 2018). Another study adopts Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) to investigate how non-deaf pupils felt about deaf students in inclusive schools by using questionnaire (Yusuf et al., 2021). IPA is a research approach that aims to understand how individuals derive meaning and make sense of their personal experiences that hold significance to them. The next study adopts art-informed methodology to report the experiences of primary school students with intellectual disabilities throughout transition in a various environments using focus group and interview (Bonati & Andriana, 2021; Emery & Anderman, 2020). Arts-informed methods enable students to participate in reflective and reflexive activities by collectively making and sharing artistic work. The last qualitative study in this paper employed art-based approach to report the perspective of students with and without special needs from a primary inclusive school (El-Lahib et al., 2022; Made et al., 2022). The researcher conducted supervision, attending classes, and interviews through informal conversations allowing students to explore the meaning behind their artworks. Arts-based approach could extract valuable and significant data from seldom-heard communities and empower participants in research (Nathan et al., 2023). Students with special needs, such as those with autism spectrum disorder, communication difficulties, and emotional and behavioural disorders, can benefit from this approach as they are more vulnerable to effective communication and understanding (Nathan et al., 2023; Swan et al., 2020). Therefore, three out of five articles in this study employed art-based methodology to gain an understanding of students' perspectives.

The SLR indicated that the issues reported in the research papers can be classified into two distinct viewpoints on inclusive education: positive and negative perspectives. Each main theme is followed by sub themes. Sub themes of students' positive perspectives are teacher support (TS), peer support (PS), sense of belonging (SB), friendship (F), and self-determination (SD). Sub themes of students' negative perspectives are academic challenges (AC), social isolation (SI), stigmatization (S), and bullying (B). Table 3 and Table 4 presents the representations of students' perspectives addressed in the research papers.

Tabel 3. The representation of students' positive perspectives

No	Study	TS	PS	SB	F	SD
1	(Bonati & Andriana, 2021)	√		√	√	√
2	(Yusuf et al., 2021)		√	√		
3	(Andriana & Evans, 2021)		√	√	√	
4	(Amka & Mirnawati, 2020)	√	√	√	√	
5	(Little et al., 2022)				√	

Tabel 4. The representation of students' negative perspectives

No	Study	AC	SI	S	BD
1	(Bonati & Andriana, 2021)				
2	(Yusuf et al., 2021)		√	√	
3	(Andriana & Evans, 2021)	√	√	√	√
4	(Amka & Mirnawati, 2020)		√		√
5	(Little et al., 2022)	√	√	√	√

Discussion

In considering positive perspectives towards inclusive education, the sub themes are teacher support, peer support, sense of belonging, friendship, and self-determination. Regarding teacher support, both students with and without special needs viewed teacher as caring and kind in supporting the need of students with and without special needs. Students with special needs are provided with additional information during their study (Amka & Mirnawati, 2020; Bonati & Andriana, 2021). Students with special needs can attend the general education curriculum and receive the required help through the collaboration and cooperation between general and special education teachers in inclusive classrooms. Fostering collaborative partnerships between special education and general education teachers can enhance student success, motivation, self-esteem, and social development (Berry, 2021; Sharma, 2019). Further, teachers' competence to personalize and differentiate inclusive teaching methods positively impacts students' perceptions of inclusive education. Prior studies emphasize the significance of inclusive teaching practices in promoting emotional, social, and academic inclusion among students, emphasizing the need for improved school experiences (Alnahdi et al., 2022; Shevchenko et al., 2020).

Relating to peer support, students with special needs receive care and assistances from their peers in the academic field. Students without special needs help their peers with special needs in many academic tasks, such as completing homework assignments, collaborating on group projects, and explaining complex subject matter. This is aligned with the importance of peers, as they can help students with special needs participate more fully in the general education setting (Hardiyana, 2016). The social participation and learning of students with special needs are significantly influenced by their peers' attitudes regarding special needs. Peers, as social agents, play crucial roles in creating a positive social environment through their positive acceptance and helping students with special needs feel included in society (Alshahrani, 2022; Freer, 2023; Rojo-Ramos et al., 2023). Further, peer support arrangements enhanced both social connections and academic participation for students with special needs (Brock et al., 2020; Huber & Carter, 2023; Tuttle & Carter, 2022).

In relation to sense of belonging, most students with special needs value the opportunity to be included in learning and play with their peers. Students with special needs also experience a sense of caring, concern, and understanding from students without special needs (Andriana & Evans, 2021; Gijn-Grosvenor & Huisman, 2020). Students identified people, respectful environments, and opportunities for interaction as crucial factors contributing to their sense of belonging. School belonging is strongly correlated with favourable academic and developmental outcomes, including academic performance, motivation, and overall well-being (Amka & Mirnawati, 2020; Stojanović & Popović-Čitić, 2022).

Concerning friendship, students with special needs shown positive social relationships and friendships, overcoming challenges in making friends and trust issues with peers without special needs. They can make friends with their peers without special needs in inclusive setting. Children's friendships with peers with special needs often mirror societal stereotypes, requiring better understanding of diversity and acceptance through firsthand experiences to foster sensitivity and understanding (Duguid, M. M., & Thomas-Hunt, 2015; Wiernik et al., 2016).

In terms of negative perspectives towards inclusive education, the sub themes are academic challenges, social isolation, stigmatization, and bullying. Regarding academic challenges, some of the students with intellectual disabilities struggle with inflexible and predetermined academic tasks at the level set out for their grade and needing support in learning such as special education teachers and more assistance in subjects like math (Andriana & Evans, 2021; Little et al., 2022). Students with special needs perceive that

teacher prioritize students without special needs and do not provide adequate academic support for them. Meanwhile, inclusive education requires teachers to engage students, develop engaging lessons, assess learning, collaborate, and use evidence-based strategies to optimize learning for all students with different abilities (Gupta & Lee, 2022; Kuo et al., 2019).

In connection with social isolation, some of students with special needs in inclusive schools have limited opportunities for social interaction, a lack of understanding and acceptance from their peers, and communication challenges. Deaf students face challenges in social interactions due to difficulties in verbal communication and claimed that their peers do not want to learn sign language for communicating (Amka & Mirnawati, 2020; Yusuf et al., 2021). Labelling students with special needs as “inclusion child” also led to feelings of isolation within a school, as the label of inclusion can act as a barrier to developing friendships.

Regarding stigmatization, some students without special needs have negative view towards their peers with special needs (Swan et al., 2020; Wehmeyer, 2020). Some of them believe that deaf students are better educated in special schools and that deaf students might not make the same level of academic effort as students without special needs (Shevchenko et al., 2020; Stojanović & Popović-Ćitić, 2022). This social stigma hinders social inclusion for students with special needs, leading to social avoidance, stereotyping, discrimination, and unfair treatment, affecting their education and society.

Relating to bullying, students without special needs stated that many of their peers with special needs are excluded and bullied while according to students with special needs, their peers without special needs are mean, arrogant, aggressive, and do not want to provide help and include them in the group work (Bong et al., 2021; Enz et al., 2007). These findings are supported by prior studies that revealed instances of bullying among students with special needs frequently encompass physical aggression, deception, verbal abuse, intimidation, humiliation, and social exclusion (Pranintasari & Wachidah, 2021; K. D. Williams & Nida, 2022).

These five studies show that Indonesian students with and without special needs have mixed perspectives on inclusive education, showing both its strengths and weaknesses. Both groups identify the positive aspects of inclusive education, including teacher and peer support, a sense of belonging, friendships, and self-determination. However, they face academic challenges, social isolation, stigmatization, and bullying in inclusive setting. The differing perspectives show that inclusive education is complex and requires multiple approaches to solve its issues. Policymakers and educators must prioritize support system improvements, budget allocation, and teacher training. Focusing on those aspects can create an inclusive, efficient, and supportive education system that benefits all students.

The primary constraint of this study is the limitation of searches in the Scopus indexing database, potentially resulting in the exclusion of relevant studies from other reputable indexing sources regarding inclusive education. Future research endeavours may consider employing alternative international indexing platforms, such as Web of Science, and exploring additional electronic databases, such as Science Direct, to identify a broader range of relevant studies. An additional constraint comes from the fact that three out of the five relevant studies in this systematic review were conducted in the Yogyakarta region. The current description provided does not sufficiently capture the comprehensive implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia.

4. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review (SLR) study focuses on the positive and negative perspectives of students with and without special needs towards inclusive education. The Scopus and ERIC databases yielded five articles that discussed students' perspectives on inclusive education in Indonesia from 2019 to 2023. Findings regarding positive perspectives, both students value teacher support, peer support, a sense of belonging, friendship, and self-determination. Regarding negative perspectives, students perceived academic challenges, social isolation, stigmatisation, and bullying in inclusive schools. This study is significant in evaluating the outcomes of inclusive education from the perspective of students who directly experience it. Addressing students' perspectives is critical for educators and policymakers to gain valuable insights and make informed decisions about inclusive education.

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