



# Assessing the Readiness of Early Childhood Teachers to Facilitate Inclusive Classes

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received July 08, 2023

Accepted November 23 23, 2023

Available online December 25, 2023

### Kata Kunci:

Kesiapan Guru, PAUD, Pendidikan Inklusif

### Keywords:

Teachers Readiness, Early Childhood, Inclusive Education



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Published by Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha.

## ABSTRAK

Setiap anak berhak mendapatkan pendidikan yang disesuaikan dengan kebutuhannya, termasuk mereka yang memiliki kebutuhan khusus. Masih banyak guru yang kesulitan dalam merancang kegiatan pembelajaran untuk kelas inklusi. Tujuan penelitian ini yaitu menganalisis kesiapan guru PAUD dalam menyelenggarakan kelas inklusif. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kuantitatif dengan pendekatan survey. Subjek penelitian ini yaitu guru PAUD berjumlah 50 orang. Metode yang digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data yaitu kuesioner dengan berbantuan google form. Instrumen pengumpulan data berupa kuesioner. Kuesioner terdiri dari lima aspek dan 42 pernyataan yang diukur dengan menggunakan skala Likert. Teknik analisis data yaitu analisis deskriptif kuantitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar guru PAUD memahami konsep pendidikan inklusif, meskipun beberapa di antaranya memerlukan peningkatan melalui pelatihan. Walaupun demikian, kesadaran guru akan pentingnya pendidikan inklusif perlu diapresiasi. Guru PAUD menunjukkan kesiapan untuk mengadopsi praktik inklusif, meskipun ada ketidakpastian seputar transisi tersebut. Keberhasilan pendidikan inklusif memerlukan dukungan sistematis yang mencakup kolaborasi, pelatihan, dan pendekatan strategis guna mengatasi tantangan serta membimbing guru PAUD menuju keberhasilan dalam menerapkan pendidikan inklusif. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah kesiapan guru PAUD dalam memfasilitasi kelas inklusif sangat penting. Kesiapan ini penting untuk menciptakan kegiatan belajar yang menyenangkan.

## ABSTRACT

Every child has the right to receive education tailored to their needs, including those with special needs. Many teachers still need help designing learning activities for inclusion classes. This research aims to analyze the readiness of PAUD teachers to hold inclusive classes. This research uses a quantitative descriptive method with a survey approach. The subjects of this research were 50 PAUD teachers. The method used to collect data was a questionnaire with the help of Google Forms. The data collection instrument is a questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of five aspects and 42 statements, measured using a Likert scale. The data analysis technique is quantitative descriptive analysis. The research results show that most PAUD teachers understand the concept of inclusive education, although some require improvement through training. However, teachers' awareness of the importance of inclusive education needs to be appreciated. Despite the transition's uncertainty, ECCE teachers demonstrate readiness to adopt inclusive practices. The success of inclusive education requires systematic support that includes collaboration, training, and strategic approaches to overcome challenges and guide PAUD teachers toward success in implementing inclusive education. This research implies that PAUD teachers' readiness to facilitate inclusive classes is critical. This readiness is essential to create enjoyable learning activities.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education in Indonesia must respect human rights and religious and cultural values and not discriminate. Every citizen has the same right to receive quality education (Abdulkhaleq, 2020; Churiyah et al., 2020; Indrawati et al., 2020). One form of education that requires special attention is inclusive education

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(IE). Inclusive education allows all students, including those with differences and extraordinary intellectual potential or talents, to learn in an environment with them (Amka, 2019; Sulthon, 2019; Suprihatiningrum, 2016). Inclusive education brings together children with special needs and typical children to learn (Dewi et al., 2020; Khayati et al., 2020). Schools must be able to accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions. Inclusive education can also be considered the placement of children with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities in the classroom (Baroroh & Rukiyati, 2022; Khusus et al., 2015; Wardah, 2019). It shows that regular classes are a relevant learning place for children with disabilities, whatever the type of disorder (Dewi & Subanda, 2017; Nuraeni & Gunawan, 2022). Inclusive education also applies to Early Childhood Education (PAUD), which refers to preschool education.

Quality PAUD is emphasized because early childhood is considered a golden period for a child's development and educational process (Denham et al., 2020; Mahmudah, 2019; Shavshishvili, 2022). Quality PAUD prioritizes gender equality, respects children's rights, respects cultural diversity, and recognizes differences, including those of Children with Special Needs (CSN). CSNs are children who need special education services tailored to their learning and development barriers (Hayati & Lubis, 2021; Minsih et al., 2021). The acceptance of children with special needs in PAUD institutions is supported by various juridical foundations, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, the World Declaration on Education for All (Education for All) in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, and the amended Constitution of 1945, particularly Article 31, paragraphs (1) and (2), which state that "every citizen has the right to education" and "every citizen is obliged to attend basic education, and the government is obliged to finance it". Additionally, the legal framework includes Law No. 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights, Law No. 4 of 1997 concerning Persons with Disabilities, Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Law Number 19 of 2011 concerning the Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities, Government Regulations of the Republic of Indonesia Number 17 of 2010 concerning the Management and Implementation of Education, and the Regulation of the Minister of National Education (Permendiknas) Number 70 of 2009 concerning Inclusive Education for Students who Have Disabilities and Have Potential Intelligence and/or Special Talents (Saputra, 2018).

The implementation of inclusive education in PAUD is important, apart from having various legal grounds, it is also supported by several research results which state that inclusive education programs in PAUD provide benefits for both children who have special needs and normal children in general. Furthermore, the implementation of inclusive education programs is able to stimulate development and instill character values in children, including children being willing to help each other and play together with children with special needs, children being able to recognize and appreciate differences, and children having responsibility and self-confidence; and children have social skills. Therefore, inclusive education should ideally commence from early childhood. This is crucial as the stimulation provided during early ages can enhance all aspects of a child's development, in accordance with the aforementioned perspective. Delay or neglect in providing timely stimulation can have adverse effects on a child's development, impeding the comprehensive unfolding of their potential (Baroroh & Rukiyati, 2022; D. P. Dewi, 2018; Rahayu, 2013). Therefore, empirically, CSN is often considered unhealthy and considered unsuitable for coexistence with developing children. CSN has the right to receive educational services like those typically developing as early as possible. Many CSN parents need help enrolling their children in school. Many PAUD institutions reject CSN for various reasons, possibly due to the school's unpreparedness in implementing IE (Hayati & Lubis, 2021; Nugroho et al., 2021). Therefore, implementing inclusive special needs education management is necessary based on the needs and development of CSN (Hasibuan et al., 2020; Mustafa et al., 2018).

Previous research findings also state that many teachers still need help designing appropriate learning activities in inclusive classes (Hamidaturrohman & Mulyani, 2020; Rofiah & Rofiana, 2017; Yunita et al., 2019). Other research confirms that poorly designed activities will impact students' skills and learning outcomes (Filgona et al., 2017; Priyaadharshini & Vinayaga Sundaram, 2018). Another impact is that students become unfocused and bored and participate in learning activities (Mehrtash et al., 2019; Rokhmat & Putrie, 2019). Learning planning in inclusive classes in kindergarten is still carried out in the same way as learning planning in general (Mastuti, 2014). Children with special needs in class are required to comply with plans that have been determined based on the regular school curriculum. Implementing learning activities in an inclusive environment is still consistent with learning in regular classes. Apart from that, implementing the IE system in PAUD still presents challenges, especially regarding educators, supporting infrastructure, and the IE curriculum in PAUD institutions, which still needs to be fully adequate (Anggita Sakti, 2020; Utami, 2018). Inclusive education in Indonesia requires the involvement of parents, teachers, and the learning environment. The challenges schools face that still need to adopt inclusion revolve around

teachers' readiness to effectively handle teaching and learning activities (Adiarti, 2014; Nugroho et al., 2021). Most kindergartens fall into institutions that require considerable development to implement an inclusive system.

To overcome these problems, teacher readiness is needed to design appropriate learning activities. Previous research findings also reveal that teacher readiness is critical in learning activities (Achmad et al., 2022; Ayuni et al., 2021; Sartika & Erni Munastiwi, 2019). The goals children want to achieve in participating in inclusive learning activities are, first, developing self-confidence in children and feeling proud of themselves for their achievements (Rofiah & Rofiana, 2017; Utami, 2018). Second, children can learn to mingle and interact with other friends (Wulandari & Hendriani, 2021). Third, children can learn to accept differences and be able to adapt to overcome these differences (Astuti, 2017; Winanti et al., 2021). The curriculum should be adapted to the needs of children, who so far have been forced to follow the curriculum. Therefore, teachers should provide opportunities to adapt the curriculum to the child. The curriculum will provide opportunities for each child to actualize their potential according to their talents, abilities, and the differences in each child (Mullett et al., 2021; Patel et al., 2021).

In establishing inclusive classrooms in PAUD, classroom management involves a complex series of actions carried out by teachers to create and maintain a conducive environment. It aims for efficient learning activities, encouraging optimal conditions for student learning (Adiarti, 2014; Yunita et al., 2019). Classroom management involves a series of sophisticated actions that teachers use to structure and enforce a classroom atmosphere that supports students in achieving their learning goals (Shofa, 2018; Yunita et al., 2019). Synthesizing the meanings of "classroom management" and "inclusion," the meaning of inclusive class management is a serious effort to create conditions for effective teaching and learning activities that encourage children to respect and accept all class members without discriminating based on physical appearance-differences, abilities, ethnicity, gender, social status, poverty, and other factors. Teachers are responsible for guiding students in mutual acceptance and collaboration with all children involved in inclusive classes (Shofa, 2018; Winanti et al., 2021).

Previous research findings also state that good learning planning is essential to improve learning activities in inclusive schools (Andujar & Nadif, 2020; Asri et al., 2021; Dover & Valls, 2018). Other research also reveals that it is essential to pay attention to teacher readiness in teaching so that learning objectives can be achieved optimally (Utami, 2018; Wulandari & Hendriani, 2021; Yunita et al., 2019). The IE program in PAUD provides positive benefits for CSN, such as stimulating development and instilling character values in children. These values include the willingness to help and play with CSN, the ability to recognize and appreciate differences, a sense of responsibility and self-confidence, and social skills. It is recognized that the teacher's role is vital in their implementation. Inclusive classrooms at the early childhood level (Dewi, 2018; Dewi & Subanda, 2017). Therefore, ensuring teacher readiness before starting to implement IE is essential. Moreover, research studies examining the implementation of IE in PAUD have yet to specifically discuss the readiness of early childhood educators to implement IE, especially in South Sulawesi. It differs from research that discusses the fulfillment of early childhood rights to IE and its benefits in general (Dewi, 2018; Rahayu, 2013). Apart from that, other research primarily focuses on IE management in PAUD, such as research in Cimahi (Windarsih et al., 2017), West Java (Shofa, 2018), Saymara Kartasura Inclusive PAUD, and PAUD Institutions in Indonesia (Anggita Sakti, 2020).

Recognizing the crucial role of teacher readiness in implementing inclusive education, particularly in PAUD, and to address the research gap identified by other scholars regarding inclusive education in PAUD, this study aims to analyze the preparedness of PAUD teachers in South Sulawesi in establishing inclusive classrooms. The research outcomes are expected to have implications for government policy-making aimed at enhancing the quality of PAUD teachers in preparing inclusive classrooms. Ultimately, this improvement is anticipated to elevate the quality of inclusive educational services for children with special needs in PAUD.

## 2. METHOD

This research uses a quantitative descriptive method with a survey approach. As surveys aim to reveal group tendencies toward specific issues or topics (Yavuz, 2023). The research was conducted in September 2023. The subjects of this research were 50 PAUD teachers (Kindergarten and Raudhatul Athfal teachers) in South Sulawesi. The data collection technique involved distributing a Google Form questionnaire link, which was filled out by PAUD teachers through their respective devices. The questionnaire consists of five aspects and 42 statements which are measured using a Likert scale. The variables in this research are related to the readiness of PAUD teachers regarding the implementation of IE in their schools. The research instrument is in the form of a questionnaire consisting of five aspects and 42 statements, using a Likert scale with a range of 1 to 4. The scale values are as follows: 1 for Strongly Disagree

(SD), 2 for Disagree (D), 3 for Agree (A), and 4 for Strongly Agree (SA). The use of a four-option (even-numbered) Likert scale is intended to prevent respondents from selecting a neutral middle option, as would occur with an odd-numbered scale. The grid for the research instrument showed in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1. Grid of The Research Questionnaire Instrument**

No	Aspects	Number of Statements
1	The understanding and learning experiences of early childhood teachers regarding IE	7
2	The attitudes and perspectives of teachers toward the implementation of IE in PAUD	8
3	The preparedness and unpreparedness of early childhood teachers in conducting IE	9
4	The needs in the implementation of IE in PAUD	9
5	The anticipated challenges in the implementation of IE in PAUD	7

The research instrument was developed using a multistage procedure, which includes the preliminary phase, questionnaire development, pilot testing, and evaluation by [\(Farnik, 2012\)](#). Pilot testing was conducted in Makassar city, involving a sample of 30 Kindergarten and Raudhatul Athfal teachers. Following the pilot testing, the next step involved evaluation, which included validity testing of statement items and reliability testing of the research instrument. The validation test of statement items was conducted using the Product Moment Correlation method with the assistance of SPSS, which involved comparing the calculated *r* values for each statement item with the critical *r*-value or *p*-value at a significance level signifikansi ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). According to the testing criteria, if the calculated *r* exceeds the critical *r* or the *p*-value is less than the significance level signifikansi ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) the statement item is deemed valid. Subsequently, the collected data through the questionnaire was processed and analyzed. The data analysis techniques employed in this research is quantitative descriptive analysis.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

Based on the outcomes of the validity test conducted through SPSS, it was determined that out of the 42 statement items under investigation, 35 were found to be valid, while 7 were considered invalid. Further mapping of the validity test results for each statement item in every aspect is presented in [Table 2](#).

**Table 2. Mapping the Results of the Validity Test for Each Statement Item in Every Aspect**

Aspects	The Number of Valid Statement Items	The Number of Invalid Statement Items
1	5	2
2	6	2
3	9	2
4	8	1
5	7	0

The instrument's reliability test also utilized the SPSS software with the Cronbach Alpha method. Based on the SPSS output, a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.720 was obtained, indicating that the statements in the instrument are sufficiently reliable. After conducting validity and reliability tests, a total of 42 statements were retained to assess the readiness of PAUD teachers in preparing inclusive classrooms in South Sulawesi. This decision is grounded in the consideration that items deemed invalid actually bear significant relevance worthy of further examination. Seven statements that did not meet the validity criteria underwent revisions, incorporating improvements in language formulation to enhance comprehension for PAUD teachers. This study involved 50 PAUD teachers in South Sulawesi. The identities of the 50 respondents reveal that all of them are female teachers. Among the total PAUD teachers who participated, 65.9% have dedicated more than 5 years of service, while 19.5% have less than a year of service. Regarding the homebase locations of the participating teachers, the findings indicate that the majority are based in Makassar City, accounting for 58.4%. Meanwhile, respondents from Bantaeng Regency constitute 11.1%, Tana Toraja City 8.3%, and both Palopo City and Bulukumba Regency each make up 5.6%. Additionally, Selayar Regency, Wajo Regency, Soppeng Regency, and Enrekang Regency each contribute 2.8%. There are five aspects employed in this research to measure the readiness of PAUD teachers in conducting inclusive classes.

In assessing the understanding and learning experiences of early childhood teachers regarding IE, a set of seven statements has been employed. These statements aim to gauge various aspects of teachers' familiarity and proficiency in IE. The first statement addresses the teachers' familiarity with the concept of IE, followed by the acknowledgment of their proficiency in creating programs for early childhood Students with Special Needs (SSN). The third statement focuses on their awareness of the types of SSN, while the fourth statement delves into their familiarity with addressing SSN based on their specific requirements. The fifth statement gauges their familiarity with differentiated learning and its implementation. The sixth statement explores their attendance at training sessions related to the implementation of IE. Finally, the seventh statement assesses the teachers' self-perceived grasp of the concept of IE. These seven statements collectively provide a comprehensive evaluation of the early childhood teachers' understanding and learning experiences in the realm of IE. The understanding and learning experiences of early childhood teachers regarding IE showed in Figure 1.

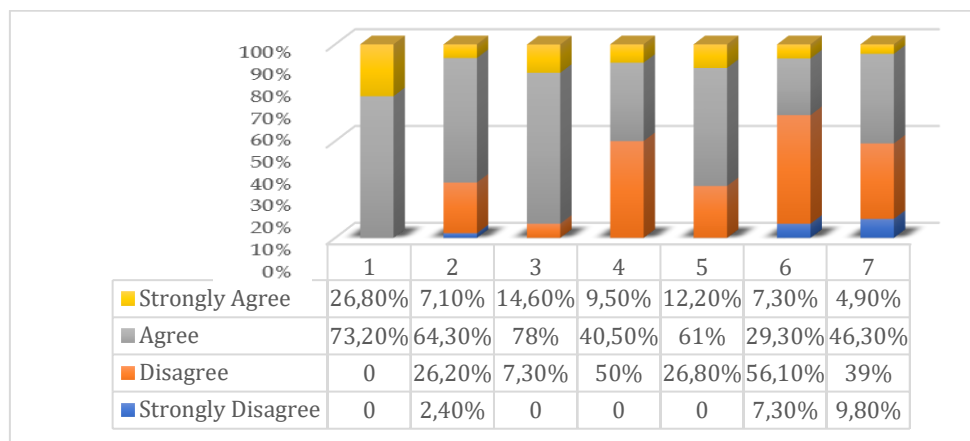


Figure 1. The Understanding and Learning Experiences of Early Childhood Teachers Regarding IE

Figure 1, provides valuable insights into the knowledge base and educational encounters of early childhood educators in the context of IE. A notable finding is the substantial level of familiarity that a majority of early childhood teachers, accounting for 73.2%, exhibit with the concept of IE. This positive response indicates a foundational understanding among educators, creating a promising starting point for the integration of inclusive practices in PAUD. However, a nuanced perspective emerges concerning the creation of programs for early childhood SSN. While the majority, at 64.3%, acknowledges the necessity of such programs, a small but noteworthy 2.4% express a lack of familiarity in this area. This highlights a potential gap in knowledge that could be addressed through targeted training initiatives to empower educators in developing tailored programs for diverse student needs.

The survey also reveals a commendable awareness among teachers of the various types of SSN, with 78% affirming their understanding. Nevertheless, a significant percentage, comprising 50%, admits a lack of familiarity in addressing SSN based on their specific requirements. This indicates a crucial area for professional development, emphasizing the importance of equipping teachers with the skills needed to cater to the individualized needs of every student. Furthermore, while a majority (61%) claims familiarity with differentiated learning and its implementation, a notable 26.8% expresses a need for improvement in understanding and applying differentiated learning approaches. This suggests an opportunity for targeted training programs to enhance teachers' competencies in accommodating diverse learning styles within the classroom. The data also underscores the positive impact of training sessions, as evidenced by the 56.1% of teachers who have participated. However, the remaining 29.3% who have not attended such sessions indicate a potential area for improvement in facilitating ongoing professional development opportunities. And the acknowledgment by 46.3% of teachers that they haven't fully grasped the concept of IE highlights the need for additional support and clarification.

In this segment, six statements have been employed to assess the attitudes and perspectives of teachers regarding the implementation of IE in PAUD. The first statement indicates a general endorsement of the implementation of IE, showcasing a positive stance among the teachers. The second statement reflects a potential source of pride for teachers if their PAUD institution transitions into an inclusive establishment, highlighting a positive correlation between pride and inclusivity. The third statement communicates an overall positive perception of IE as a commendable concept. However, the fourth statement introduces a nuanced perspective, acknowledging that while IE is intriguing, there are perceived challenges and complexities in its implementation, contributing to a more balanced viewpoint among the teachers. The fifth

statement underscores a belief in the potential of IE to foster empathy among non-special needs students towards their peers with special needs, introducing a social and emotional dimension to the discourse. Lastly, the sixth statement emphasizes a broader commitment to the principle that, irrespective of the prevailing conditions of the PAUD institution, IE should be implemented, aligning it with the principles of human rights. The responses from 50 PAUD teachers in South Sulawesi to these six statements showed in Figure 2.

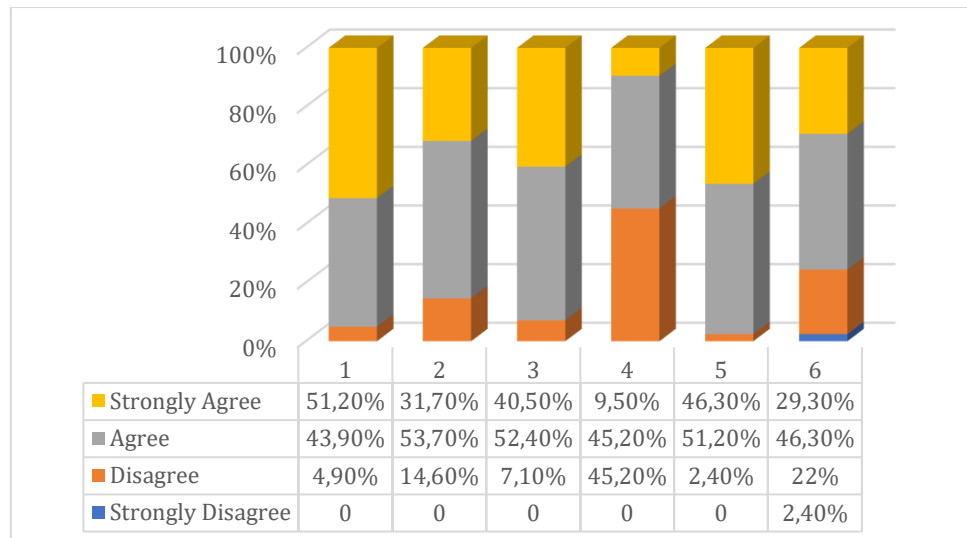
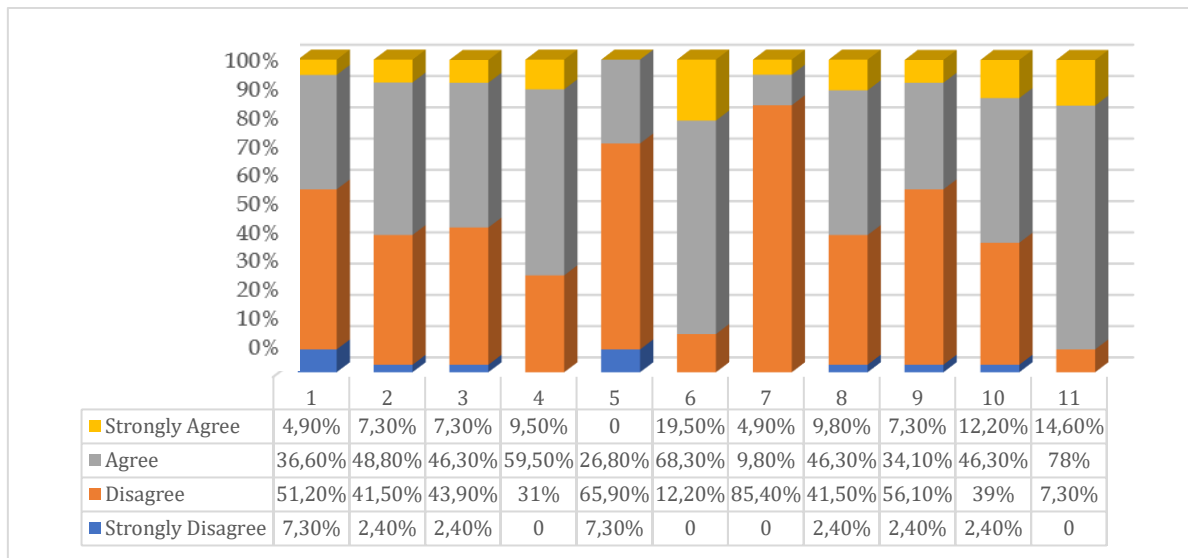


Figure 2. Teachers' Attitudes and Perspectives Towards the Implementation of IE in PAUD

Based on the survey responses, it is evident that there is varying support for the implementation of IE in PAUD. A majority of respondents (51.2%) agree with the idea of IE, while 43.9% express support for its implementation. However, there is a notable proportion (4.9%) that strongly disagrees with the concept. When considering the pride associated with an institution becoming inclusive, a significant percentage (53.7%) agree, indicating a positive attitude toward the transformation. Nevertheless, 14.6% express disagreement or strong disagreement, suggesting a level of hesitation or resistance. The perception of IE as a good idea is shared by a substantial portion of respondents (52.4%), while 40.5% agree but with some reservations. However, 7.1% express a lack of support for the concept. The notion that IE is intriguing but challenging to implement is divided among respondents, with 45.2% agreeing with this perspective. A smaller percentage (9.5%) strongly agrees with the challenges, while 45.2% disagree. Regarding the belief that IE fosters empathy in non-special needs students, a majority (51.2%) agrees, while 46.3% express support with some reservations. Only a small percentage (2.4%) disagrees with this idea. Opinions are mixed when it comes to the implementation of IE regardless of the institution's conditions. While 46.3% express support, 29.3% agree with reservations, and 22% disagree. Finally, a significant percentage (48.8%) agrees that IE is a part of human rights, while 46.3% express support with some reservations. A small proportion (4.9%) disagrees with this perspective. Overall the majority of teachers exhibit positive attitudes and support for IE. Despite recognizing potential challenges, there is a clear endorsement of the idea that IE can foster empathy and is integral to human rights. This indicates a positive foundation for further exploration and development of strategies to facilitate the successful implementation of IE practices in PAUD institutions.

In assessing the Readiness and Unreadiness of PAUD Teachers in Implementing IE, eleven statements are utilized as measurement tools. The first statement expresses, "To be honest, I am not ready if the PAUD institution where I teach becomes an inclusive PAUD." The second statement, "I feel inadequate to teach SSN." The third statement, "I feel prepared to welcome students with any type of special needs." The fourth statement, "I am interested and prepared to provide individualized instruction for SSN." The fifth statement, "I feel burdened because my workload will increase if IE is implemented." The sixth statement, "I am ready to collaborate in developing learning strategies for SSN in inclusive classrooms." The seventh statement, "I feel reluctant about establishing collaboration with parents of SSN and other teachers." The eighth statement, "I am eager and looking forward to implementing IE in my classroom." The ninth statement, "I believe that the PAUD institution where I teach is not fully prepared to implement IE." The tenth statement, "I feel that the PAUD teachers in my school are not yet prepared because they have not fully grasped the implementation of IE." And the eleventh statement, "I am ready to collaborate with Shadow

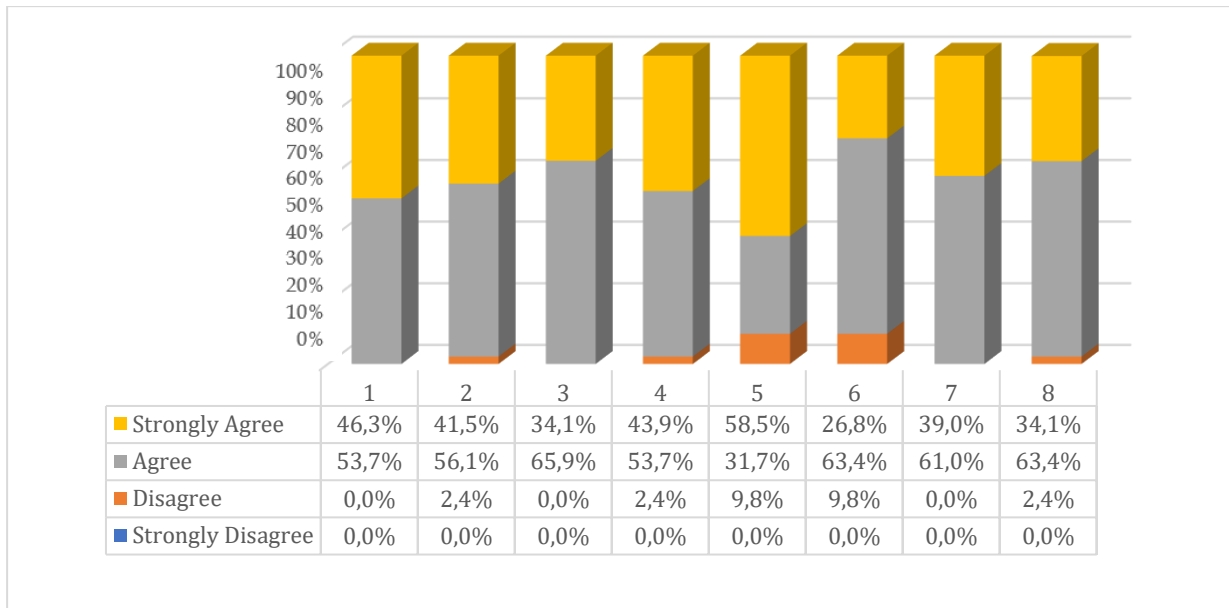
Teachers in the classroom." The responses from 50 PAUD teachers in South Sulawesi to these eleven statements showed in [Figure 3](#).



**Figure 3.** The Readiness and Unreadiness of PAUD Teachers in Implementing IE

Based on data regarding the readiness and unreadiness of PAUD teachers in implementing IE, several findings reflect the complexity of PAUD teachers' perspectives. A significant portion of teachers (36.6%) expresses that they are not fully prepared if their PAUD institution transitions to IE, with 4.9% strongly agreeing with this statement. The majority of teachers (48.8%) feel unconfident in teaching SSN, and 7.3% strongly agree with this statement. Although a considerable number of teachers (43.9%) feel prepared to accept students with various special needs, 2.4% strongly disagree with this statement. Concerning individualized learning for SSN, some teachers (31%) express disagreement. Meanwhile, 26.8% of teachers agree that their workload would increase if IE were implemented. Although the majority of teachers (46.3%) agree to implement IE, a subset of teachers (2.4%) strongly disagrees, and 41.5% disagree. Some teachers (34.1%) agree that PAUD institutions are not ready to implement IE, and 7.3% strongly agree. Regarding teachers' understanding, a substantial number of teachers (46.3%) agree that PAUD teachers are not prepared due to a lack of understanding of IE implementation, with 12.2% strongly agreeing. Although the majority of teachers (92.7%) are willing to collaborate with Special Classroom Assistants, a small percentage of teachers (7.3%) disagree with this collaboration. Overall, these findings indicate the complexity of teachers' perspectives and readiness to addressing the challenges of implementing IE in this PAUD setting, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach to support and guide teachers in the context of IE.

In measuring the aspect of the Needs for the Implementation of IE in PAUD, eight statements are employed. The first statement asserts, "In my opinion, PAUD teachers need training to be prepared to accommodate SSN in the classroom." The second statement, "In my opinion, PAUD institutions need screening tools for assessing students' special needs during admissions." The third statement, "In my opinion, PAUD institutions need continuous collaboration and partnerships with experts." The fourth statement, "In my opinion, PAUD institutions need to improve and enhance facilities and infrastructure to make them more accessible." The fifth statement, "PAUD should provide a disability awareness program to enhance understanding and acceptance of SSN." The sixth statement, "In my opinion, PAUD institutions need to conduct regular meetings to discuss the progress and programs for SSN." The seventh statement, "In my opinion, parents need to actively participate in collaborating to ensure the success of IE in PAUD." The eighth statement, "In my opinion, every PAUD teacher needs to continually enhance their competence in implementing IE." The responses provided by 50 PAUD teachers in South Sulawesi to these eight statements showed in [Figure 4](#).

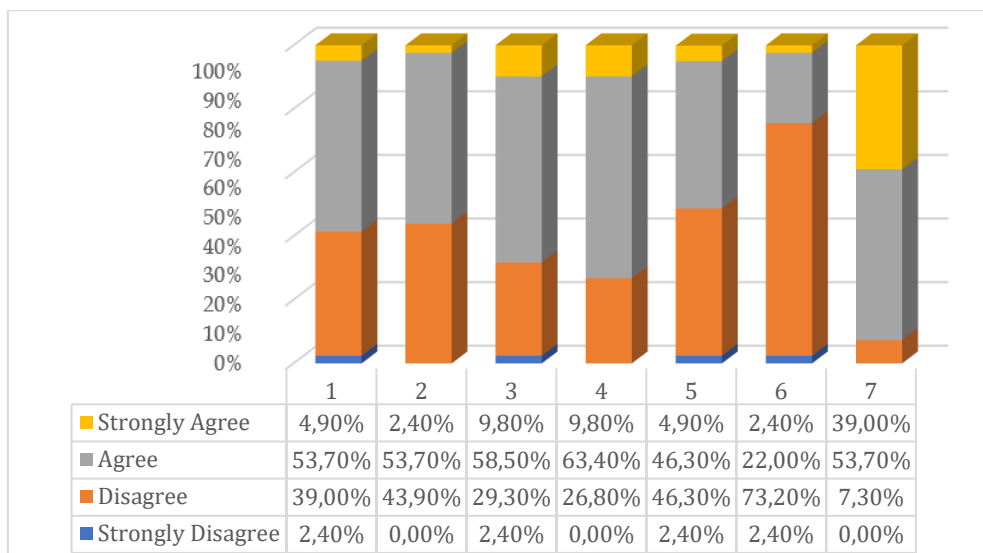


**Figure 4.** Requirements in Implementing IE in PAUD

Figure 4 summarizes the perceived requirements for implementing IE in PAUD, as indicated by the responses of the participants. The first statement highlights that a significant portion (53.7%) agrees that PAUD teachers need training to effectively accommodate SSN in the classroom. Similarly, the second statement indicates that 56.1% agree on the necessity of screening tools for assessing students' special needs during admissions. The third statement emphasizes the importance of continuous collaboration and partnerships with experts, with 65.9% expressing agreement. Regarding the improvement of facilities and infrastructure, the fourth statement reveals that 53.7% agree on the need for PAUD institutions to enhance accessibility. The fifth statement underscores the suggestion that PAUD should provide a disability awareness program, with a majority (58.5%) in agreement. The need for regular meetings to discuss progress and programs for SSN is highlighted in the sixth statement, where 63.4% express agreement. The seventh statement emphasizes the active participation of parents in collaborating for the success of IE, with 61% in agreement. Lastly, the eighth statement indicates that 63.4% agree on the necessity for every PAUD teacher to continually enhance their competence in implementing IE. The responses indicate a general consensus among participants regarding the various requirements for successfully implementing IE in PAUD. The majority express agreement on the need for training, screening tools, collaboration with experts, improved facilities, disability awareness programs, regular meetings, active parental participation, and continual teacher competence enhancement. These findings suggest a recognition of the multifaceted efforts needed to create an inclusive educational environment in PAUD settings.

In assessing the anticipated challenges in the implementation of IE in PAUD, seven statements are utilized as measurement tools. The first statement expresses, "I am worried that the parents of regular students may not accept their children attending school with special needs students". The second statement, "I am concerned that regular students may not accept the presence of SSN and that this could lead to problems". The third statement, "I feel that the lack of accessible facilities and infrastructure in the PAUD institution could lead to problems in the future". The fourth statement, "I feel that my limited knowledge could become a challenge in providing IE services". The fifth statement, "I am concerned about the presence of bullying in the PAUD environment." The sixth statement, "I'm concerned that implementing IE could pose financial challenges for this PAUD institution." The seventh statement, "I believe that the implementation of IE will undoubtedly come with challenges, but with good cooperation, these challenges can be overcome." The responses from 50 PAUD teachers in South Sulawesi to these seven statements showed in Figure 5.





**Table 5.** The Anticipated Challenges in The Implementation of IE In PAUD

Based on the anticipated challenges in implementing IE in PAUD institutions, the findings indicate several concerns expressed by PAUD teachers. A majority of teachers (53.7%) and a small portion (4.9%) strongly agree that they are worried about regular students' parents not accepting the presence of SSN in school. Additionally, disagreement from regular students regarding the existence of SSN is seen as a potential issue by 53.7% of teachers, with 2.4% strongly agreeing. Infrastructure constraints are also a focal point of concern, where 58.5% agree and 9.8% strongly agree that inaccessible facilities and infrastructure could pose problems in the future. Furthermore, 63.4% of teachers agree, and 9.8% strongly agree that their knowledge limitations could be a constraint in providing IE services. Concerns about bullying in the PAUD environment are also reflected in the responses, with 46.3% of teachers agreeing and 4.9% strongly agreeing. Furthermore, a considerable number of teachers (73.2%) express disagreement with the statement that the implementation of IE can lead to financial problems in PAUD institutions. However, a majority of teachers (53.7%) agree, and 39% strongly agree that the implementation of IE will indeed pose challenges, but effective collaboration can overcome them. Overall, these projections of challenges underscore the importance of thorough planning, collaborative approaches, and awareness of potential obstacles in realizing IE in PAUD institutions in South Sulawesi.

**Discussion**

The results of the assessment of PAUD teachers' readiness, particularly in understanding and learning experiences related to IE, indicate the potential for knowledge gaps. This finding underscores the need for targeted training initiatives to empower educators in developing specialized programs to meet the diverse needs of students. Previous research findings show that training is very important to provide to teachers so that it can improve teacher professionalism (Heru & Yuliani, 2020; Mantra et al., 2022; Septiana & Hanafi, 2022). Addressing this gap in understanding is crucial to ensuring a more comprehensive and effective implementation of inclusive practices in PAUD. Socialization activities on IE need to be conducted widely by responsible institutions to enhance the competency of PAUD teachers (Endang Yunitasari et al., 2023; Nuraeni & Gunawan, 2022). Additionally, the improvement of knowledge among PAUD teachers can be achieved through Inclusive Education workshops, as demonstrated by in Sentani, Jayapura Regency (Endang Yunitasari et al., 2023). Understanding and services provided by PAUD teachers for children with special needs can be enhanced through the implementation of psychoeducation (Pradnyaswari et al., 2022).

Measuring teachers' readiness regarding attitudes and perspectives toward the implementation of IE in PAUD, it can be concluded that the majority of teachers show positive attitudes and express support for IE. Although they acknowledge potential challenges, it is evident that there is strong support for the idea that IE can help foster empathy and is an integral part of human rights. This positive attitude creates an encouraging foundation for the development of strategies to promote the successful implementation of IE practices in PAUD institutions (Amka, 2019; Lestari et al., 2022). While some obstacles may arise, this positive attitude gives hope that PAUD teachers are willing to engage in efforts to implement IE and are ready to play their critical roles in creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students. Previous findings also confirm that teachers have an important role in inclusive learning activities (Utami, 2018; R. S. Wulandari & Hendriani, 2021; Yunita et al., 2019). With this strong support, it can be

expected that the next steps will be directed towards increasing understanding, training, and policy development that supports the implementation of IE at the PAUD level.

In the context of the complexity of teachers' perspectives and readiness to addressing the challenges of implementing IE in this PAUD setting, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach to support and guide teachers in the context of IE (Astuti, 2017; Pradnyaswari et al., 2022). This aligns with the findings of the research that training, workshops, field practices, or certification are crucial elements for IE teachers, as they are negatively correlated with anxiety. Teachers with limited training tend to have higher concerns when conducting classroom learning in IE. Moreover, self-efficacy is also closely associated with teachers' attitudes towards IE. Teachers with higher self-efficacy are more capable of managing IE classrooms and exhibit a more positive attitude towards IE.

The responses majority indicate a general consensus among participants regarding the various requirements for successfully implementing IE in PAUD and express agreement on the need for training, screening tools, collaboration with experts, improved facilities, disability awareness programs, regular meetings, active parental participation, and continual teacher competence enhancement. These findings suggest a recognition of the multifaceted efforts needed to create an inclusive educational environment in PAUD settings. This finding is consistent with research results indicating that to enhance the capabilities of PAUD teachers in implementing IE, they need to undergo training, especially shadow teachers, to continually upgrade their knowledge and skills in assisting SSN (Astuti, 2017; Badiah et al., 2020; Pradnyaswari et al., 2022; Saputra, 2018).

Furthermore, the implementation of identification, observation, and assessment during the enrollment of new students in inclusive PAUD institutions is also essential. This is aimed at ensuring that CSN receive education tailored to their specific requirements (Dewi, 2018; Hidayati & Warmansyah, 2021; Irvan, 2020; Kismawiyati, 2018). Several studies that indicate parental concerns regarding both CSN and those without special needs (Rejeki, 2016; Wulandari & Afifah, 2023). The concerns of parents with children having special needs often revolve around the fear that their child may not be fully accepted by peers. This apprehension stems from prevailing negative stigmas and cultural beliefs within the social environment. In some cases, parents might even decide against enrolling their child in school, opting instead to keep them at home due to these concerns (Baroroh & Rukiyati, 2022; Hayati & Lubis, 2021). Moreover, CSN who feel rejected, lack companionship, experience bullying, and face discrimination tend to withdraw from interacting with the social environment (Nugroho et al., 2021; Sharma, 2018). Parents are also concerned that children without special needs may emulate negative behaviors exhibited by CSN. Teachers serving as companions to children in schools require training in child psychology, especially in handling bullying cases, to provide appropriate stimuli in shaping the character of the child (Rejeki, 2016). The success of addressing bullying encompasses various factors, with one of them being the readiness of educators. The implication of this research is that the readiness of PAUD teachers in facilitating inclusive classes is very important. This readiness is important to create fun learning activities for young children so that they can improve children's skills and knowledge.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The majority of PAUD teachers in South Sulawesi have a good understanding of IE, although a small percentage still needs improvement through training. Their awareness of the needs of SSN is commendable, but the insufficient understanding highlights the importance of additional support through specialized training. Meanwhile, PAUD teachers demonstrate readiness to adopt inclusive practices, despite uncertainties about the transition. The success of IE implementation requires a comprehensive support system. These findings emphasize the importance of collaboration, training, and strategic approaches to overcome challenges and guide PAUD teachers towards successful IE.

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