



Attitudes of Elementary School Teachers towards Inclusive Education: Implementation of the SACIE-R Scale

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Abstrak

Anak berkebutuhan khusus yang belajar di kelas inklusi masih menjadi bahan diskusi yang hangat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi sikap guru-guru sekolah dasar terhadap pendidikan inklusi di Indonesia. Sejumlah 64 guru sekolah dasar telah berpartisipasi dalam pengisian kuesioner SACIE-R. Kuesioner tersebut terdiri dari tiga subskala yaitu sentimen, kekhawatiran dan sikap. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik non-parametrik (*Spearman Correlation coefficient*) dan analisis analisis regresi linier. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa sikap guru sekolah dasar terhadap pendidikan inklusi adalah positif dengan rata-rata nilai SACIE-R yaitu 3.00. Guru sekolah dasar memiliki ketakutan bahwa mereka tidak memiliki pengetahuan dan keterampilan yang diwajibkan untuk mengajarkan siswa berkebutuhan khusus dan juga belum siap mengajar anak yang membutuhkan teknologi dalam komunikasi, misalnya Braille dan bahasa isyarat, di kelas mereka. Lama mengajar dan pengalaman mengajar serta mengikuti pelatihan berkaitan dengan anak berkebutuhan khusus berkorelasi positif dengan subskala kekhawatiran. Pelatihan keterampilan khusus seperti Braille dan bahasa isyarat untuk guru-guru sekolah dasar dibutuhkan untuk membantu mengatasi kecemasan dan ketidaksiapan untuk mengajar anak berkebutuhan khusus di kelas inklusi.

Kata Kunci: Sikap guru, pendidikan inklusif, SACIE-R

Abstract

Children with special education needs (SEN) studying in inclusive classes is still a hot issue to be discussed. This study aims to investigate the attitudes of elementary school teachers towards inclusive education in Indonesia. A total of 64 elementary school teachers participated in filling out the SACIE-R questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of three subscales, namely sentiment, concern, and attitude. The data were analyzed using non-parametric statistics (Spearman Correlation coefficient) and multiple regression analysis. The results show that the attitude of elementary school teachers toward inclusive education is positive with a mean SACIE-R ($M = 3.00$). Elementary school teachers have fears that they do not have the knowledge and skills required to teach students with SEN and are not ready to teach students who require communicative technology (e.g. Braille and sign language) in their classrooms. The length of teaching experience, along with experience in instructing and working with children with SEN, showed a positive correlation with the concern subscale. Special skill training such as Braille and sign language for elementary school teachers is needed to help them overcome their worries and unpreparedness to teach children with SEN in inclusive classes.

Keywords: Teacher attitudes, inclusive education, SACIE-R

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education means welcoming all children without exception to study in regular schools (Ahsan et al., 2012; Mitiku et al., 2014). The presence of inclusive education is crucial to increase the participation of children (with disabilities) in school (Sakız & Woods, 2015) and acts as a platform for equality for all students (Stepaniuk, 2018). However, it seems that placement is a standard for inclusive education that is often prioritized over the quality of the teaching and learning process in inclusive education (Haug, 2017). In addition, inclusive education requires teachers to adapt to children's learning styles (Gunn & Delafield-Butt, 2015) and practices best serve the needs of all students, including those with special needs (Al-Shammari et al., 2019).

Teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education affect the success of its implementation in regular schools (Ewing et al., 2017). Several studies have discussed the perspectives of teachers toward inclusive education. The results indicate that prospective teachers were worried if they would receive the help they needed to teach children with SEN in the classrooms (Sharma, 2012), the teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education were not notably impacted by their gender or their special education training (Orakçı et al., 2016), teachers' confidence and positivity aid support for all students, including special needs (Yang & Yu, 2021), and teacher attitudes are influenced by several factors (Beyene & Tizazu, 2010).

Studies on teacher attitudes towards inclusive education from several countries have been well discussed and published. However, current research regarding the attitudes of regular teachers, especially elementary school teachers, towards inclusive education in Indonesia is still limited. Besides, this study is crucial since Indonesia has implemented inclusive education for quite a long time. The current number of inclusive elementary schools is 17,134, and the number of students with special needs at the elementary level is 57,155 (Direktorat Sekolah Dasar, 2021). This number is the highest among the education level of other inclusive education providers. It indicates that more students with special needs attend inclusive elementary schools than inclusive high schools or junior high schools. Therefore, this study investigates elementary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and the influence of several variables on teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education.

METHOD

This study involved 64 elementary school teachers in Indonesia. The questionnaire used is SACIE-R which was adopted from (Forlin et al., 2011) and translated into Indonesian. The questionnaire consists of three subscales. Those are sentiment, concern, and attitude. The sentiment subscale assesses the view when teachers interact with students with special needs. The attitude subscale measures teacher acceptance of students with special needs. The concern subscale focuses on teachers' concerns about students with special needs in their classes. The number of questions on the questionnaire is 15 and use a Likert scale of 1-4 (1 = strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree). Table 1 shows the demographic and professional data of the primary school teachers who participated in this study.

Table 1. Demographic Participant

	Category	Total
Gender	Female	52 (81.25 %)
	Male	12 (18.75 %)
Age	≤ 30 years old	13 (20.31 %)
	31 – 40 years old	32 (50.00 %)
	41 – 50 years old	15 (23.44 %)
	> 50 years old	4 (6.25 %)
Institutional status	Public	52 (81.25 %)
	Private	12 (18.75 %)
Years of teaching	≤ 5 years old	11 (17.19 %)

Category	Total
6 – 10 years old	10 (15.63 %)
11 – 15 years old	30 (46.88 %)
16-20 years old	10 (15.63 %)
> 20 years old	3 (4.69 %)
Experience teaching children with SEN	
Yes	22 (34.48 %)
No	42 (65.63 %)
Experience in teacher training about inclusion or children with SEN	
Yes	16 (25.00 %)
No	48 (75.00 %)

The calculation of the mean score for the three subscales is the total SACIE-R estimate. The overall Cronbach Alpha coefficient is 0.771, which is a good indicator. Reverse coding was applied to the sentiment and concern scales so that the maximum score has a positive value for all questions in the questionnaire and characterizes a positive attitude towards inclusive education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In general, the attitude of primary school teachers toward inclusive education is positive with a mean ($M = 3.00$). The value of the sentiment subscale ($M = 3.44$) shows the highest value among the other subscales. It illustrates that the teacher's sentiment when interacting with students with special needs is very high (3.44). Teachers are not afraid to look a person with a disability straight in the face ($M = 3.78$), tend to make contact with people with disabilities ($M = 3.63$), and easy to overcome my initial shock when meeting people with severe physical disabilities ($M = 3.36$), and little thought that they could eventually end up with a disability (3.30). However, they feel a little terrible if they have special needs ($M = 3.14$).

Table 2. Average score and standard deviation of the SACIE-R score

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Sentiment Subscale	3.44	0.83
Concern Subscale	3.25	0.75
Attitude Subscale	2.29	0.96
Total SACIE-R	3.00	0.99

The concern subscale has a high score ($M = 3.25$). Teachers are not afraid to feel more stressed if there are children with special needs in their class ($M = 3.56$), believe they can handle the increased workload if they have children with special needs in their class ($M = 3.48$) and believe students with special needs can be accepted by other students ($M = 3.28$). However, teachers have some fear that they do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach students with special needs ($M = 2.97$) and difficulty to provide appropriate attention to all students in an inclusive class ($M = 2.97$).

Furthermore, the score of the attitude subscale is the smallest value ($M = 2.29$, low) among those of the other subscales. Teachers are not prepared to teach students who require communicative technology (Braille and sign language) in their classrooms ($M = 1.94$) and require individualized academic programs ($M = 2.22$). Teachers were better prepared to teach students who paid less attention in class ($M = 2.45$) than students who had difficulty expressing their thoughts verbally ($M = 2.44$) and students who frequently failed exams ($M = 2.42$).

The relationship between variables was analyzed using Spearman's correlation. The results of the analysis found that male teachers had a more positive attitude towards inclusive education than female teachers ($r = .055$, $p < .01$). Meanwhile, the age variable has a positive correlation with the SACIE-R value ($r = .052$, $p < .01$). That is, the more mature the elementary school teachers are, the more they show a positive attitude towards inclusive education.

All three professional variables positively correlated for the concern subscale ($r = .111$, $p < .01$, $r = .212$, $p < .01$, $r = .164$, $p < .01$). This means that the longer the teacher's teaching experience, the less the teacher's

level of concern for children with SEN in the classroom. Also, teachers who have experience teaching and attending teacher training about inclusion or children with SEN have a lower level of concern than those who do not. Public primary school teachers had a more positive perspective on inclusion than private school teachers ($r = -.068, p < .01$).

Interestingly, however, the three professional variables negatively correlated with the sentiment and attitude subscale. More specifically, the years of teaching and experience in teacher training negatively linked with the sentiment subscale ($r = -.134, p < .01$ and $r = -.099, p < .01$). This means that years of teaching and the experience in teacher training do not lead increasingly positive teacher interactions with students with special needs. Furthermore, years of teaching and experiencing in working with children with SEN negatively correlated with the attitude subscale ($r = -.076, p < .01$ and $r = -.139, p < .01$). This indicates that the level of teacher acceptance of students with special needs decreases with the increasing length of time serving the teacher and experience teaching students with special needs.

To determine the level of relationship between the variables and teachers' attitudes, a multiple regression analysis was calculated. The result of the study found that six variables used in this study only explained 3.9% of the SACIE-R scale and found no significant variables.

In general, this study shows the positive attitude of elementary school teachers towards the presence of children with SEN in inclusive schools, their concern about the knowledge and skills needed to teach students with special needs and the unpreparedness of teachers teaching students who need communicative technology and individual academic programs. These results are inversely proportional to several studies of teachers' attitudes towards children with special needs in inclusive schools that tend to show negative or neutral attitudes (Agavelyan et al., 2020; de Boer et al., 2011; Galović et al., 2014; Saloviita, 2020).

Even though elementary school teachers generally show a positive attitude, they have concerns about teaching children with special needs because of the limited knowledge and skills they have to teach them in inclusive classes. This result is in line with research conducted by (Allam & Martin, 2021) that most teachers who teach children with special needs (learning disabilities) do not receive special educational needs training from schools and they feel they are not qualified to teach these children. Furthermore, another research also revealed that regular teachers are not ready to ban inclusive education because of the lack of the resources, education and training (Alcosero et al., 2023).

In this study, teachers' concerns impact their unpreparedness to teach children with sensory disabilities, such as blind and deaf children, due to specific skills required. In fact, the specific skills tend to be mastered by a teacher from special education background. This condition may encourage high expectations for class teachers regarding the presence of special companion teachers in inclusive classes.

Furthermore, the findings regarding male and older teachers have a more positive view of inclusive education in line with Agavelyan's research (Agavelyan et al., 2020). However, this finding contrasts Saloviita's and Butakor's findings which states that female and young teachers have more positive attitudes than male teachers (Butakor et al., 2018; Saloviita, 2020). Meanwhile, another research showed that prospective female and older teachers had a more positive attitude toward male and young teachers (Round et al., 2016). The difference is because gender and age are not significant variables of teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education.

A negative correlation was found between experience working with children with the SEN variable and the attitude subscale. Galovic's research support the finding that the experience of teaching children with SEN is not significantly related to teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education (Galović et al., 2014). Furthermore, there were no differences in attitudes toward inclusive education between those who have never interacted with students with special education needs and those who have such experiences (Ediyanto et al., 2020).

Although several variables show a positive correlation coefficient (r), the degree of closeness is weak (close to 0). This finding in line with Saloviita who revealed that one of the influential variables that influenced

teachers' attitudes toward inclusion was the professional category (years of teaching, experience in teaching children with SEN, and in inclusive or special education teacher training) (Saloviita, 2019). However, in this study, none of the six variables showed significant variables, where all variables only explained 3.9% of teacher attitudes. It means other variables (outside of this study) present teacher attitude.

CONCLUSION

Elementary school teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusive education in Indonesia. The positive correlation results between the three professional variables on the anxiety subscale indicate that one of the variables that the government can try to encourage teachers to be ready to teach children with special needs is to organize teacher training to meet the needs of children with SEN in inclusive classes. Hopefully, the teacher training able to prepare teachers to teach students with special needs in inclusion classes. Furthermore, there is a need for further research with more research subjects and adding other more significant independent variables.

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