

Teacher's perceptions of policy and implementation of inclusive education at state junior high school in east Belitung regency

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Abstract

This research aims to describe teachers' perceptions of the policy and implementation of inclusive education at junior high schools in East Belitung Regency. Teacher perceptions are divided into three aspects, namely cognitive, affective, and conative. This research is a descriptive quantitative approach with a survey research type. The subjects in this research were Junior High School teachers in East Belitung Regency, with a sample size of 190 people. Data collection techniques use questionnaires. The data analysis technique used is quantitative descriptive analysis. This research found that 27,9% of teachers at Junior High School in East Belitung Regency have a positive perception toward inclusive education policy, and 27,73% of teachers at Junior High School in East Belitung Regency have a positive perception toward implementation of inclusive education.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education Policy, Implementation of Inclusive Education, Perception*

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INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the essential human needs for processing and interacting in society. It is also a right that must be provided to the Indonesian community, including those with special needs. In order to fulfil the community's educational rights, the government implements inclusive education. Inclusive education is seen as a solution to achieving "Education for All," including children with special needs (Sari & Setyowati, 2024). According to Law Number 20 of 2003, Article 5, Paragraph 1, every citizen has the right to receive quality education; everyone is entitled to quality education.

The Ministerial Regulation Number 46 of 2017 explains that inclusive education is a system that allows students with special needs and exceptional talents to learn together with other students. The concept of inclusive education is regarded as an approach to meet the needs of students with special needs by enhancing their involvement in learning activities, culture, and society (Haryanti, 2020).

The goal of inclusive education is to ensure that children with special needs receive a quality education that meets the necessary educational services. In the context of inclusive education in Indonesia, all models of special education, including inclusive education, should start with a change in paradigm or perspective. This means providing the best educational services for each individual without discrimination, as well as understanding special needs as an effort to positively value diversity (Mahabbati, 2014).

Inclusive education in Indonesia has been implemented starting from the elementary school level and even from early childhood education. According to the 2022 Basic Education Data, 40,928 schools have implemented inclusive education at the elementary, junior high school, senior high school, and vocational high school, both public and private. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that each year, around 3,000 to 5,000 children are born with special needs worldwide (Kemendikbud, 2023). Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Culture through the Merdeka Belajar policy continues to strive for inclusive education for every child and encourages the growth of inclusive schools.

Currently, inclusive education in Indonesia is implemented from early childhood education to primary school. According to the 2022 Basic Education Data, around 40,928 schools, including elementary, junior high school, senior high school, and vocational high school, both public and private, have implemented inclusive education. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) show that each year, approximately 3,000 to 5,000 children are born with special needs worldwide (Kemendikbud, 2023). Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Culture continues to work through the Merdeka Belajar policy to ensure every child has learning opportunities and to encourage the development of inclusive schools.

Issues in the implementation of inclusive education in schools involve various aspects such as students, curriculum, educators, learning activities, school management, facilities, cooperation between schools and government, parental involvement, and community perspectives. One major issue in inclusive education is the lack of understanding among educators regarding this concept (Ni'mah, 2022). Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education are crucial to identifying potential barriers to its implementation. Research by Fitrianasari (in Anggadewi & Evanjeli, 2022) in Blitar Regency revealed that out of 20 class teachers and special education teachers, only 20% had a positive perception of inclusive education, while 80% showed negative perceptions.

Challenges in inclusive education extend beyond formal education and include issues such as a shortage of special guidance teachers, inadequate competencies of regular teachers, misunderstandings about children with special needs, unadjusted curriculum, and insufficient supportive facilities. Furthermore, there is a need for inclusive education training for regular teachers, socialization about children with special needs, curriculum adjustments, and improved facilities that are not yet optimal (Husnul, 2023). These issues reflect that the challenges are not only related to the complexity of learning for children with special needs but also to the lack of proper understanding and perception of teachers regarding inclusive education.

Challenges affecting inclusive education include bullying, lack of teacher training and attitudes, inadequate school facilities, and insufficient parental support (Madarang & Martin,

2022). The success of inclusive education for children with special needs heavily relies on parental involvement and support as one of the factors for a child's success. Furthermore, teachers' role and acceptance towards children with special needs are critical because they support the child's educational rights. In practice, a survey conducted by Aldabas (2020) with a population of 382 teachers showed that while teachers are prepared to teach students with special needs, they have low self-confidence due to short or insufficient experience in teaching children with special needs.

Inclusive Junior High Schools (SMP) are schools that apply the principles of inclusion by integrating students with special needs into regular classes. Inclusive SMP aims to value differences and provide equal opportunities for all students. However, the implementation of inclusive education in SMP often faces various issues. According to Kaltsum's research (2024), the main challenges in implementing inclusion policies in SMP Negeri Kota Sangatta include the unavailability of Special Accompanist Teachers (GPK), a lack of inclusive facilities, and the absence of quotas for Students with Special Needs (PDBK). Meanwhile, Huroiyati & Paramitha (2015) found that although teachers in inclusive SMPs across Surabaya support the inclusion program, they still face difficulties in handling children with special needs due to uncertainties in managing these students. These issues demonstrate that inclusive education in SMP still faces various obstacles. This research aims to evaluate the state of inclusive education in State Junior High Schools in East Belitung Regency, particularly concerning teachers' perceptions of the policies and implementation of inclusive education.

East Belitung Regency, located in the Bangka Belitung Islands Province, has been implementing inclusive education since 2015. According to enrolment data, there are 354 students with special needs out of a total of 21,222 students in the regency. However, research on inclusive education in East Belitung Regency is still quite limited. This research question is: how teachers' perceptions of the policies and implementation of inclusive education in state junior high schools in East Belitung Regency? The objective of this study is to describe teachers' views on the policies and implementation of inclusive education in State Junior High Schools in the regency. This research is important for identifying factors influencing teachers' perceptions of inclusive education, with the hope of helping to develop more effective strategies to support the implementation of inclusive education.

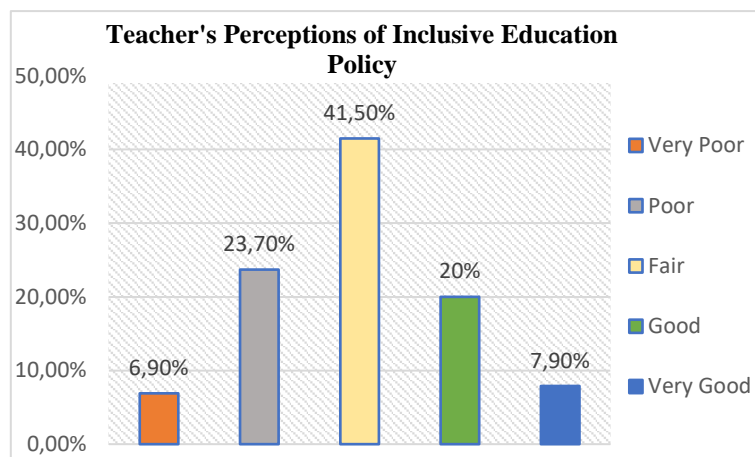
RESEARCH METHODS

The study used a descriptive quantitative approach, specifically using a survey method. This method was chosen because it aligns with the research objective of describing teachers' perceptions of the policies and implementation of inclusive education. The study is conducted at public junior high schools in East Belitung Regency, with data collection occurring from May to June 2024. The sampling method used in this study is cluster sampling, which involves grouping schools based on regional characteristics. There are three regional characteristics in East Belitung Regency: urban areas, coastal areas, and rural areas. After categorizing these areas, the sample was taken using the formula from Isaac and Michael, with a margin of error of 5% or a confidence level of 95%. The sample size obtained was 190 teachers out of a population of 361 teachers. Data collection for this study was carried out by distributing questionnaires and surveys to respondents using Google Forms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

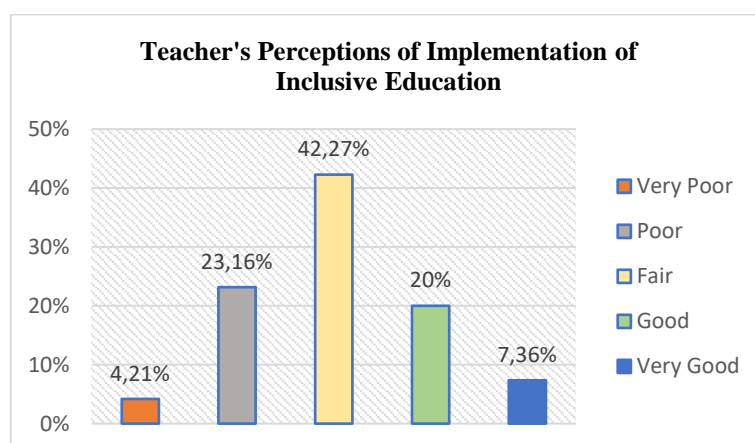
Teacher's perceptions of inclusive education policy in junior high school in east Belitung regency



Picture 1. Diagram of Teacher's Perceptions of Inclusive Education Policy

The teacher's perceptions of the policy of inclusive education in public junior high schools in East Belitung Regency are categorized as follows: very good perception at 7,90% with a total of 15 teachers, good perception at 20% with a total of 38 teachers, fair perception at 41,50% with a total of 79 teachers, poor perception at 23,70% with a total of 45 teachers, and very poor perception at 6,90% with a total of 13 teachers. It is noted that only 27,90% of the teachers, amounting to 53 teachers, have a good perception of the policy of inclusive education.

Teacher's perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education in junior high school in east Belitung regency



Picture 2. Diagram of Teacher's Perceptions of Implementation of Inclusive Education.

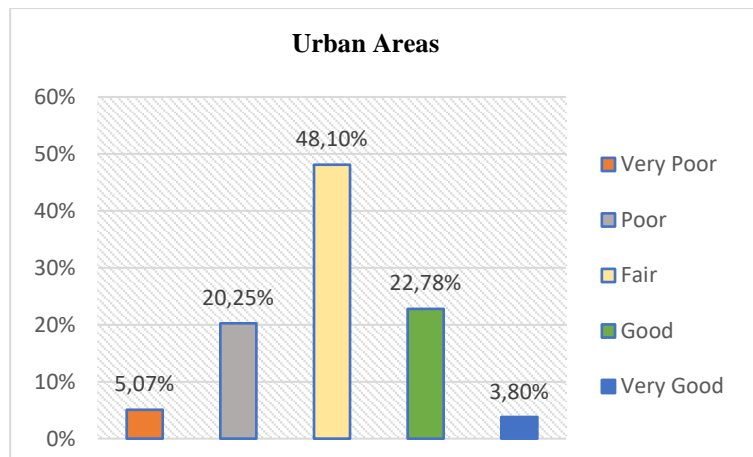
The Teacher's perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education in public junior high schools in East Belitung Regency are categorized as follows: very good perception at 4.21% with a total of 8 teachers, good perception at 23.16% with a total of 44 teachers, fair perception at 42.27% with a total of 86 teachers, poor perception at 20% with a total of 38 teachers, and very poor perception at 7.36% with a total of 14 teachers. Based on these results, it can be concluded

that only 27.37% of the teachers have a good or positive perception of the implementation of inclusive education in public junior high schools in East Belitung Regency.

Teacher’s perceptions of the policy and implementation of inclusive education in junior high school in east Belitung regency according of regional characteristics

East Belitung Regency consists of three categories of regional characteristics: urban areas, coastal areas, and rural areas. After the data was collected and processed, the perceptions for each type of regional characteristic in East Belitung Regency were identified. The research findings are detailed as follows:

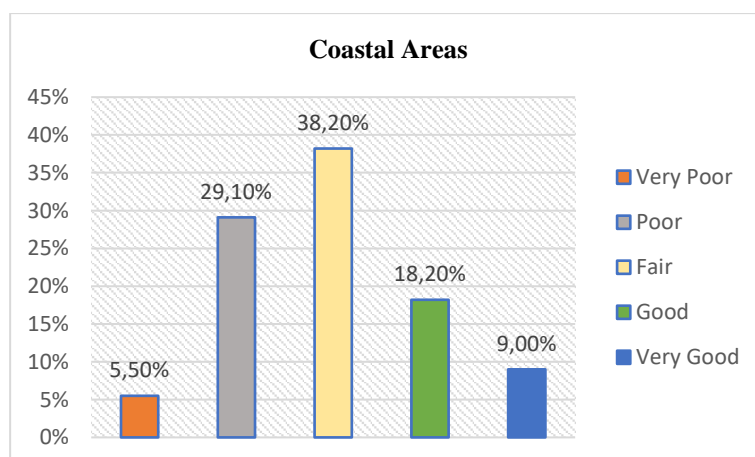
a. Urban Areas



Picture 3. Teacher’s Perceptions of Policy and Implementation of Inclusive Education in Urban Areas.

Teacher’s perceptions of the policy and implementation of inclusive education in urban areas are categorized as follows: very good at 3.80%, good at 22.78%, fair at 48.10%, poor at 20.25%, and very poor at 5.07%. Based on this data, it is found that only 26.58% of teachers in urban areas have a good or positive perception.

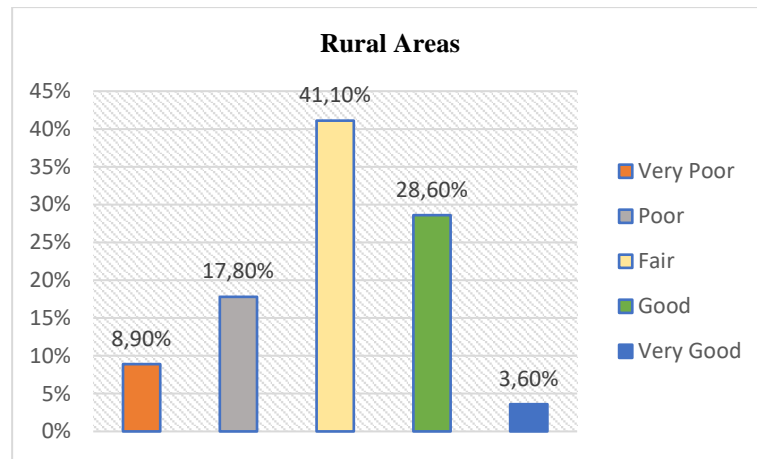
b. Coastal Areas



Picture 4. Teacher’s Perceptions of Policy and Implementation of Inclusive Education in Coastal Areas

Teachers' perceptions of the policy and implementation of inclusive education in coastal areas are categorized as follows: very good at 9%, good at 18.20%, fair at 38.20%, poor at 29.10%, and very poor at 5.50%. Thus, it is found that only 27.2% of teachers have a good or positive perception.

c. Rural Areas



Picture 5. Teacher's Perceptions of Policy and Implementation of Inclusive Education in Rural Areas

Based on the research results from the table and diagram above, it is found that teachers' perceptions of the policy and implementation of inclusive education are categorized as follows: very good at 3.60%, good at 28.60%, fair at 41.10%, poor at 17.80%, and very poor at 8.90%. Thus, it is found that only 32.2% of teachers have a good or positive perception.

Discussion

Teacher's perceptions of inclusive education policy in junior high school in east Belitung regency

Based on the research results, out of 190 teachers, only 27.9% have a good perception of the inclusive education policy. This result indicates that junior high school teachers in East Belitung Regency have implemented the inclusive education policy fairly well. The implementation of the inclusive education policy, categorized as fairly good, is aimed at achieving the goals of the inclusive education policy.

Inclusive education policy refers to all regulations related to the implementation of inclusive education that have been systematically organized to be adhered to and implemented according to school needs. The aspects of the inclusive education policy as perceived by teachers can be seen from their understanding of the concept of inclusive education policy, the objectives of inclusive education, and the principles of inclusive education. Thus, the indicators or dimensions of the inclusive education policy include objectives, plans, programs, decisions, and impacts (Jones in Hasbullah, 2016) of the inclusive education policy. In this study, teachers' perceptions are examined based on three aspects: cognitive, affective, and conative aspects (Walgito, 2010).

Teachers need to have a deep understanding of the inclusive education policy applied in the schools where they teach. Understanding, readiness, and support for this policy are crucial to support students' learning experiences in regular school environments. Moberg (2020) emphasizes that the success of inclusive education requires support from both above (policy) and below (e.g., teacher competence and qualifications). Both types of support are necessary because one alone is insufficient or not optimally effective. A good understanding of the education policy by teachers will be very beneficial for students with special needs participating in inclusive education in regular schools. According to Permendiknas No. 70 of 2009, inclusive education is a system that provides

opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities or special potentials and/or skills, to learn in an academic environment alongside other students.

Teacher's perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education in junior high school in east Belitung regency

Based on the research results, it is found that only 27.37% of teachers have a good or positive perception of the implementation of inclusive education in public junior high schools in East Belitung Regency. This result indicates that the majority of teachers' perceptions regarding the implementation of inclusive education are not fully positive. Teachers' perceptions will be understood once the inclusive education program has been implemented in the schools where they are assigned.

The implementation of inclusive education consists of several aspects or indicators to ensure that education is carried out effectively and integrated well within the education system according to the guidelines of inclusive education policy. The indicators of inclusive education implementation according to Edward III's Theory (in Hasbullah, 2016) include communication, resources, disposition or attitudes, and bureaucratic structure. These indicators are then perceived by teachers through the three aspects of perception: cognitive, affective, and conative (Walgito, 2010).

The concept of inclusive education was created because learning communities are designed specifically to address the needs of students. Therefore, the implementation of inclusive education can be improved through cooperation between teachers and parents (Alfikri, 2022). However, the perceptions of teachers in public junior high schools in East Belitung Regency are not yet fully positive regarding the implementation of inclusive education.

The cognitive aspect in this study involves components of knowledge, views, and individual thinking (Walgito, 1991). Teachers' understanding, knowledge, or experience in implementing inclusive education, categorized as fair, affects the implementation of inclusive education in public junior high schools in East Belitung Regency. Teachers sometimes face challenges in understanding the educational policies being implemented. Sanusi (1988 in Suryani, 2021) argues that policy implementation is a component of policy involving the process of carrying out and seeking alternatives decided based on applicable laws. Educational policy implementation will be effective if there is communication, resources, disposition or attitudes, and bureaucratic structure (Edward III's Theory in Hasbullah, 2016).

The affective aspect, which includes feelings and emotional states, will influence teachers' perceptions of the ongoing implementation of inclusive education in their schools. A perception is influenced by cultural values or value systems, which lead to feelings of approval or disapproval (Allport in Anshari, 2013). The affective aspect in this study concerns components of feelings and emotional states towards judgments of good or bad based on one's emotional factors (Walgito, 2010). The judgment of teachers on the implementation of inclusive education at their schools is the subject of this research.

Teachers play a crucial role in integrating students with special needs into school or community environments. This is in line with Ni'mah et al. (2022), who argue that inclusive education is a special education (PLB) that agrees that students with special needs receive equivalent services in general schools alongside their peers. By socializing with their peers, students with special needs can develop their potential and skills, which facilitates their social process.

The conative aspect in this study refers to components related to motivation, attitudes, behaviour, or activities of teachers according to specific objects or situations, leading to perceptions (Walgito, 1991). Teachers' perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education are still categorized as fair, indicating that teachers may face obstacles in implementing inclusive education at their schools. Kustiawan (in Purbasari et al., 2022) suggests that the implementation of inclusive education includes several components such as new student admission, identification, curriculum adaptation, lesson design, classroom arrangement, and assessment.

During activities such as New Student Admission and identification, teachers are required to communicate with parents or guardians and prospective students regarding the inclusive

education being implemented at the school. Additionally, communicating or discussing the implementation of inclusive education with fellow teachers is also important to avoid errors in conveying information about inclusive education. This aims to ensure that teachers are involved and contribute to the implementation of education. Teachers sometimes face difficulties in teaching classes with students with special needs due to various factors such as years of teaching experience, educational qualifications, or others. The conative aspect varies among teachers according to their ability or proficiency in implementing inclusive education. Teachers' perceptions of the implementation of inclusive education in the conative aspect need to be improved, as implementing inclusive education in public junior high schools in East Belitung Regency will help students with special needs gain equal opportunities in obtaining education. This is because inclusive education still requires special attention.

Teacher's perceptions of the policy and implementation of inclusive education in junior high school in east Belitung regency according of regional characteristics

Teachers in rural areas have a better percentage compared to other regions, even though rural teachers face many challenges such as parental rejection of students with special needs in the same class as their children, lack of information related to inclusive education, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, and other issues. However, the fact is that teachers in urban areas have the lowest percentage compared to other regions.

The research results show that the percentage of teachers' perceptions in rural areas tends to be better than in urban areas, although generally urban schools have more resources than rural or coastal schools. This aligns with Ulandary's (2023) research, which identified three reasons why inclusive education implementation in rural areas has a positive attitude: (1) urban schools are more specialized compared to rural ones; (2) it is very difficult for children in rural areas with special needs to attend special education schools in the city due to transportation and economic constraints, so they attend regular schools that are closer and more practical; and (3) urban schools face more pressure to improve students' academic performance than rural schools. However, further research is needed on teachers' perceptions of inclusive education policies in rural, urban, and coastal areas. This is in line with Moberg's (2020) view that successful inclusive education requires policy support and teachers as implementers. With most teachers having 10-20 years of teaching experience, their experience in the field of education is considered sufficient.

On the other hand, coastal areas usually face challenges related to teacher training on inclusive education, community support, and access to supportive schools. Consequently, there are some concerns among teachers regarding the implementation of inclusive education. Research by Madarang and Martin (2022) shows that challenges affecting inclusive education include bullying, lack of training and teacher attitudes, inadequate school facilities, and insufficient parental support. However, what is needed for inclusive education is direct community involvement.

Teachers' perceptions of the policy and implementation of education in public junior high schools in East Belitung Regency vary by region. These differences in perception may reflect teachers' viewpoints and experiences related to inclusive education. Although the principles and goals of inclusive education are the same, its implementation can vary significantly across different regional characteristics.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research results, it is stated that the percentage of teachers with a good or positive perception of the inclusive education policy in public junior high schools in East Belitung Regency, covering cognitive, affective, and conative aspects, is 27.9%. Similarly, the percentage of teachers with a good or positive perception of the implementation of inclusive education in the same schools, across cognitive, affective, and conative aspects, is 27.37%. The analysis indicates that teachers' perceptions in the cognitive, affective, and conative aspects are not yet fully positive. Based on the research results, the following recommendations can be made:

1. For Teachers: Use the findings as an evaluation of the inclusive education policy and its implementation in public junior high schools in East Belitung Regency.
2. For Schools: Accommodate the needs of students with special needs in the classroom and optimize students' abilities comprehensively according to their diversity.
3. For the Government: Organize socialization regarding inclusive education both in schools and in the community and commit to improving teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in East Belitung Regency.
4. For Future Researchers: This research should serve as a reference for future studies. It is recommended to develop this research using different research methods and to conduct studies with a broader and more diverse population.

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