



# Indonesian Journal of Community and Special Needs Education



Journal homepage: <http://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/IJCSNE/>

## Protecting Children's Rights through Inclusive Schools for Students with Special Needs: Legal and Phenomenological Perspectives

*Fatih Afrisal Bagus Septiano\**, Satryo Sasono

Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

\*Correspondence: E-mail: [fatihafrisal@student.uns.ac.id](mailto:fatihafrisal@student.uns.ac.id)

### ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is a constitutional mandate under Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution, guaranteeing the right to equitable and quality education for all citizens, including children with special needs. However, implementation in Indonesia faces persistent challenges, such as limited availability of inclusive schools, inadequate facilities, insufficiently trained teachers, and curriculum designs that fail to accommodate diverse needs. This study employs a literature review using legal and phenomenological approaches to examine the implementation of inclusive education, referencing Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities and Ministry of Education Regulation No. 48 of 2023 on Appropriate Accommodations. Findings reveal that stigma, discrimination, and ineffective policy enforcement remain major barriers. Recommendations include enhancing teacher competencies, improving infrastructure, and fostering a cultural shift toward inclusion. Strengthening these aspects is essential for inclusive schools to realize the rights and potential of children with special needs in an equitable educational environment.

© 2025 Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

### ARTICLE INFO

#### **Article History:**

*Submitted/Received 09 May 2025*

*First Revised 10 Jun 2025*

*Accepted 11 Aug 2025*

*First Available online 12 Aug 2025*

*Publication Date 01 Sep 2025*

#### **Keyword:**

*Inclusive schools,  
Children with special needs,  
Right to education.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of inclusive education plays a fundamental role as a philosophy and strategy in Indonesia's education system, with the primary goal of achieving equitable and quality education for all children, including children with special needs or disabilities. Many reports regarding this matter have been well-documented ([Prasetyo et al., 2025](#); [Glushchenko, 2025](#); [Azizah et al., 2022](#); [Faddilah et al., 2022](#); [Musayaroh et al., 2023](#); [Adesokan & Bojuwoye, 2023](#); [Baxtiyor & Sardor, 2024](#); [Oktamnovna & Ruslanovna, 2024](#); [Khudayshukurnovna et al., 2024](#); [Yunusovna et al., 2024](#); [Al Shaban Radi & Hanafi, 2024](#)).

This idea emphasizes that every child can access fair education and services guaranteed according to their needs ([Kurniawati, 2021](#)). In practice, inclusive education not only involves the acceptance of children with special needs in mainstream schools but also ensures sufficient support and services for them to thrive.

However, implementing inclusive schools in Indonesia still faces various complex issues and challenges. One of the main problems is the lack of individual support for children with special needs. Many schools still lack adequate facilities and support services, so children with special needs often face difficulties getting the special attention they need ([Kriswanto et al., 2023](#)).

Additionally, stigma and discrimination persist, both from peers and teachers who are not yet fully skilled in addressing the diverse needs of students. This situation is exacerbated by the limited number of teachers with specific expertise in inclusive education, as well as school environments that are not yet fully inclusive and supportive for individuals with disabilities.

There has been significant growth in regular schools that accommodate children with special needs. In 2021, 35,802 public schools were implementing inclusive education. This number increased to 40,928 schools in 2022 and continued to grow, reaching 44,477 schools in 2023, spread across various provinces in Indonesia ([Ummah et al., 2023](#)).

In line with the increase in the number of inclusive schools, the number of students with special needs enrolled in regular schools also increased by 20,000 compared to two years prior. In 2023, there were 146,205 students, while in 2021, there were 126,458 ([Ummah et al., 2023](#)). Additionally, 152,756 students with other special needs are studying at 2,326 Special Education Schools across Indonesia ([Herawati, 2016](#)). This data indicates that while the number of inclusive schools and students has increased, the ratio remains imbalanced and is still far from meeting the needs of all children with special needs in Indonesia.

The institutionalization of inclusive education through 'inclusive schools' does not always create the desired level of inclusivity. Inclusive schools sometimes create new segregation and hidden exclusion against children with special needs.

In the context of geographical communication, inclusive schools act as spaces that build hierarchies and categorization practices that make children with special needs a minority group, so that they continue to experience exclusion even though they are physically in the same learning environment as typical children ([Kikabhai, 2022](#)). Subjective views regarding the identity of children with special needs in inclusive schools may arise due to the power that regulates and categorizes them within the school's social structure ([Hanifah et al., 202](#)).

In Indonesia, although Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities and Government Regulation Number 13 of 2020 concerning Appropriate Accommodations for Students with Disabilities also regulate inclusive education, several inclusive schools have not been matched with the optimal implementation of inclusive education. Inclusive culture in educational institutions has not been implemented effectively.

Many children with special needs still experience bullying and discrimination at school, even though such places should be safe and supportive of children's growth and development ([Susilowati](#)

*et al.*, 2022). Additionally, barriers in access to information, parental readiness, unequal access to education, insufficient numbers and quality of teachers, and limited learning support infrastructure remain challenges in implementing inclusive education. This situation indicates that although there has been an increase in the number of inclusive schools and students with special needs being served, the quality of services and support in the field still requires significant improvement (Darma & Rusyidi, 2023).

People with disabilities are individuals who experience long-term physical, mental, intellectual, and/or sensory limitations, which can present barriers and difficulties in fully and effectively participating in interactions with other members of society (Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021). Children with disabilities have unique characteristics that reflect impairments in mental, emotional, or physical abilities. Children with disabilities are different from typical children in terms of mental, sensory, physical, neuromuscular, social, and emotional aspects (Herawati, 2016).

Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that children with disabilities are children who experience physical, emotional, and mental disorders and require assistance from others to meet their daily needs. Inclusive education is crucial for children with special needs, as inclusive schools provide services tailored to their needs, enabling them to access education that aligns with their abilities and intelligence.

Inclusive schools are regular educational institutions adapted to meet the needs of children with disabilities and those with exceptional intelligence and talent within an integrated system society (Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021). Inclusive education is an educational program that accommodates all students in the same classroom based on age and development (Watkins, 2009).

Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation Number 48 of 2023 regulates the inclusive education system on Appropriate Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Formal Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, Secondary Education, and Higher Education Institutions. In practice, the success of inclusive education for children with disabilities is influenced by several factors, including attitudes, school policies, collaboration and coordination between classroom teachers and special education teachers, and teachers' teaching abilities.

This study examined the above issue by emphasizing the importance of special education teachers with the necessary skills and training to support the success of inclusive education in schools. Special education teachers are essential because regular teachers often feel overwhelmed when dealing with students with disabilities, who require more time and attention.

Collaboration and communication between regular classroom teachers and special education teachers are crucial for creating an inclusive and effective learning environment. This study also emphasized that to reduce discrimination against children with disabilities, supportive policies, more disability-friendly facilities, and anti-stigma campaigns are essential. Overall, inclusive education in Indonesia still faces significant challenges regarding the number of students and the quality of services provided.

The actual needs of children with special needs exceed the number of inclusive schools and students available. Therefore, to achieve inclusive education, it is necessary to enhance teacher capacity, provide adequate facilities, strengthen policies, and change school culture. This will enable equality and justice in education for every child.

This study contributes a novel perspective by integrating a legal framework analysis with a phenomenological understanding of inclusive education for children with special needs in Indonesia. Unlike previous studies that focus solely on pedagogical practices or policy reviews in isolation, this research bridges the gap between legal mandates and the lived realities within inclusive schools.

By doing so, it highlights the dissonance between statutory provisions and on-the-ground implementation, especially in terms of teacher preparedness, societal stigma, and infrastructural readiness. The novelty lies in its dual analytical lens, enabling a holistic assessment of inclusivity that considers both compliance with the law and the human experiences shaping educational outcomes. The findings are expected to inform policy refinement, enhance public awareness, and guide the development of more equitable, disability-friendly educational environments across Indonesia.

## 2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the implementation of inclusive schools for children with special needs in Indonesia. The approach combined a literature review, drawing on both legal and phenomenological perspectives.

The legal approach was used to analyze statutory frameworks, government regulations, and ministerial decrees related to inclusive education, particularly Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities, Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, Government Regulation No. 13 of 2020, and Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 48 of 2023. This was complemented by a phenomenological approach to explore lived experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding inclusive schooling from the viewpoints of teachers, parents, and society as reported in scholarly publications.

Data were obtained from peer-reviewed journal articles, government documents, international conventions (e.g., the Convention on the Rights of the Child), and relevant reports published between 2008 and 2024. Sources were selected through a purposive sampling process, prioritizing works that addressed:

- (i) Legal frameworks for inclusive education in Indonesia;
- (ii) Implementation strategies and barriers in schools;
- (iii) Societal attitudes toward children with special needs;
- (iv) Best practices in inclusive pedagogy.

The literature search was conducted through Google Scholar, Scopus, and national journal databases using keywords such as *inclusive education*, *children with special needs*, *right to education*, and *Indonesia*. The retrieved literature was screened based on relevance, credibility, and recency. Data interpretation followed a thematic analysis framework, allowing integration of legal provisions with lived experience narratives to produce a comprehensive understanding of the inclusivity landscape in Indonesia's education system.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. The Divergence Between Inclusive Education and Segregated Education

Segregated education separates children with special needs from other children without special needs. Segregated education aims to optimize the potential of children with special needs. This is done because there is concern that children with special needs will have difficulty developing if they are combined with other normal children, as they may experience difficulties in following lessons and understanding the material taught. There is also concern about bullying from their peers (Latifah, 2020).

Children with special needs require specialized educational services from those provided to typical children. This has led to the concept of special education services, commonly referred to as special schools (Irawati & Winario, 2020).

Inclusive education is a planned and targeted process in which children with special needs are treated alongside their peers, focusing not only on their limitations but also on providing comprehensive services to individuals, in addition to their limitations, and striving to maximize the

potential and strengths of children with special needs in managing themselves, while introducing and preparing them and their surroundings about their existence.

The sooner society acknowledges and accepts the existence of children with special needs, the easier it will be for them to adapt and focus on their strengths rather than their limitations, thereby achieving the goals of education. Segregated education is an educational system that separates children with special needs from typical children, with separate implementation regarding location, time, methods, and learning programs.

In contrast, inclusive education integrates educational services for children with special needs with typical children in a regular school, enabling them to learn together in the same environment with support tailored to the needs of students with special needs (Damayanti & Rismaningtyas, 2021).

### 3.2. The Need and Rights of Children with Special Needs in Education

Article 31, paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia states: "Every citizen has the right to education." Article 5, paragraph (3) of Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in education.

Persons with disabilities have the right to inclusive and equitable education, including accessibility to educational facilities and accommodations appropriate to their needs. Inclusive education is a type of education that integrates children without disabilities with children with special needs in one learning environment to meet the needs of children with special needs (Fatmawiyati & Permata, 2023).

Inclusive education is an educational system where all children are given equal opportunities to learn in a supportive environment and receive educational services tailored to their needs. This system has no distinctions based on physical or mental abilities, ethnicity, race, social status, political views, language, place of residence, gender, religion, or beliefs.

### 3.3. Government Policies Related to Inclusive Education

Law Number 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, particularly Article 9, guarantees the right of every child to receive education without discrimination, including children with special needs. International conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ratified by Indonesia through Presidential Decree Number 36 of 1990, align with this legal framework. However, due to a lack of awareness and oversight mechanisms, the implementation of this law remains inadequate in remote areas.

Additionally, the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation Number 4 of 2022 on National Education Standards strengthens the rights of children with special needs by requiring schools to provide appropriate accommodations (Sari *et al.*, 2022). Policies without adequate funding can become symbolic, such as the shortage of special education teachers in inclusive schools (Florian, 2014).

Nevertheless, Government Regulation Number 13 of 2020 on Appropriate Accommodations for Students with Disabilities has made progress by allocating a budget to meet these needs. To ensure accessibility for children with disabilities, the Child Protection Law and technical education policies must work together (Hernández-Saca *et al.*, 2023).

Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation Number 48 of 2023 on Appropriate Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Formal Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, Secondary Education, and Higher Education Institutions, which mandates the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools, serves as the basis for inclusive school

operations. Many educational institutions struggle to implement adaptive curricula because this regulation is not accompanied by appropriate technical guidelines (Ainscow & Miles, 2008).

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Regulation Number 4 of 2017 on Special Protection for Children with Disabilities regarding Policies for Handling Students with Disabilities emphasizes the importance of various sectors in supporting inclusive education, including social and health services. In terms of implementation capacity, Java and Sumatra have higher educational inclusion levels than Papua (Jannah *et al.*, 2021). Government Regulation Number 17 of 2020 on the Provision of Disability Services imposes sanctions on schools that refuse to admit children with disabilities to strengthen the policy. The voices of persons with disabilities must be part of accountability when assessing inclusion policies (Woodcock *et al.*, 2022).

### 3.4. Basic principles of inclusive education

All students can learn together, and differences help each child develop their potential, which is the main principle of inclusive education.

Children with special needs who attend regular classes can participate fully and are not merely accepted into the school environment. The inclusive education curriculum can be adapted to the circumstances, characteristics, and needs of children with special needs. Inclusive education can meet the educational needs of children with special needs in several ways, as follows (Hanifah *et al.*, 2022):

- (i) Equal access: All children, including those with disabilities, have the right to the same educational facilities, resources, and services without discrimination. Schools must provide the necessary assistance so that all children can participate, academically, physically, and socially.
- (ii) Safe and supportive environment: Prevent discrimination, violence, exploitation, and neglect against children with disabilities because inclusive education creates a learning environment that accepts and values diversity.
- (iii) Individualized approach and curriculum modification: The curriculum and learning are tailored to the abilities and needs of each student with special needs through learning accommodations (adjustments to instruction, materials, assignments, time, and learning methods) and curriculum modification (adjustments to learning objectives based on the child's abilities).
- (iv) Developing potential and independence: Inclusive education helps children with disabilities realize their potential and become more confident and independent. This makes them more independent and less dependent on others, allowing them to participate actively in society.
- (v) Improved social skills and tolerance: Children can learn to respect one another, show empathy, and build healthy social interactions. An inclusive environment can eliminate stigma and marginalization of children with disabilities and teach tolerance to all students.
- (vi) Ongoing support: Inclusive schools provide teachers with guidance, tools, and training to adequately meet the needs of children with special needs.

### 3.5. Disorientation of Inclusive Schools from the Perspective of Education and Society

To meet the needs of inclusive schools, the categorization of educational provision should be changed. Inclusive schools require more complex preparation than regular schools, including the curriculum of academic units, the availability of teaching staff, resources, and evaluation systems.

Currently, it is evident how inclusive schools are influenced by specific discourse on children with special needs, which ultimately excludes children with special needs. The admission of students with disabilities into inclusive schools highlights the nature of inclusive schools as a categorization practice (Putra & Neviyarni, 2023). The diving practice scheme is used to separate, categorize, normalize, and institutionalize human populations to maintain cultural order.



Someone deemed “unproductive” is identified as a political issue with the “rise of modernity.” (Francisco *et al.*, 2020). After the government divided them into ‘the mad’, ‘the poor’, and ‘the delinquent’, they were then disciplined in institutions, mental hospitals, prisons, and schools (Cabatay & Gonzales, 2023).

### 3.6. Dehumanization of Children with Special Needs

Dehumanization of children with special needs is an act that degrades their dignity and ignores their rights and needs as whole human beings. In education, children with special needs are often treated unfairly and are considered individuals who must be adapted to the education system without considering their potential, uniqueness, and unique needs. This leads to dehumanization (Widiyanto & Putra, 2021).

Children with special needs are often seen as “empty vessels” that only need to be filled with academic content, without allowing them to grow critically, creatively, and in line with their abilities (Kikabhai, 2022). Such behavior can hinder the academic development of children with special needs and hurt their psychological and social well-being.

As a result, children with disabilities experience feelings of alienation, loss of self-esteem, lack of desire to learn, and long-lasting emotional wounds. Stigmas such as “burden on society” or “not normal” encourage discrimination and hinder access to inclusive learning environments. Additionally, children with disabilities are often ignored in terms of their voices and participation, as if they have no right to determine their own education and life path (Francisco *et al.*, 2020).

In addition, dehumanization can also appear in a more subtle form through psychological violence. Through demeaning attitudes or language, even if there is no direct intention to cause harm. Expressions such as “poor thing” and “be patient with a child like this” may seem sympathetic.

Still, in an unempathetic environment, they can reinforce the view that children with special needs are weak, dependent on others, and powerless. Although not physically visible, this type of violence significantly impacts the emotional development of children with disabilities.

Dehumanization has very serious consequences (Oktinigrum & Muslihasari, 2023). Psychological disorders, anxiety, and even loss of will to live are the result of rejection, exclusion, and the degradation of the dignity of children with disabilities. They are raised in an environment that does not support self-development, so they are never allowed to maximize their extraordinary potential. Every child, including children with disabilities, can develop and contribute if they are given equal opportunities, fair treatment, and appropriate support (Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021).

### 3.7. Children with Special Needs as a Primary Appraisal or Threat

Children with special needs require attention, resources, and a special approach that differs from typical children. The presence of children with special needs can be a source of stress, which is influenced by the parents' perceptions. Parents must go through several processes before accepting their child's condition, namely (Anggraeni & Valentina, 2015):

- (i) The denial stage, where disbelief arises upon receiving the diagnosis from experts, which can lead to confusion regarding the diagnosis and the cause of the disorder experienced by the child. Feelings of shock and denial are natural self-protective reactions, as emotional conditions that make it difficult for parents to think clearly.
- (ii) The anger stage is when there is an emotional reaction characterized by negative emotions, especially anger, and irritability over minor issues.
- (iii) The negotiation stage, where parents think about what they can do to help their child recover.
- (iv) The depressive phase, also known as depression, is a phase in which people feel hopeless, lose hope, and blame themselves.

- (v) The acceptance stage, or acceptance, is when children accept their circumstances, which tend to be the best possible given their abilities and capacities.

Parents and other family members often experience emotional distress, such as stress, anxiety, and even depression, especially after a child is diagnosed with special needs. Families need to make significant adjustments to accept and support children with special needs.

Adaptation and conformity, mastery, and individual differences are the four components of self-adjustment (Watkins, 2009). Parents who can adapt to children with special needs will have a good relationship with their children.

Parents must adapt because it will guide them in treating their children humanely. Due to the many unexpected situations and conditions that children with special needs may face, parents of children with special needs need knowledge to respond appropriately and quickly (Gumilang & Irnawati, 2022). One parent's adaptation differs from another's, even though their children have the same type of disorder.

### 3.8. Children with Special Needs and Unconditional Positive Regard

Some members of society often look down upon children with special needs; they are usually considered a burden or "social trash" that must be avoided. This discriminatory view causes strong social stigma, which directly affects how people view and treat children with special needs in their daily lives.

One tangible effect of this stigma is that some parents refuse to allow children with special needs in the same classroom as their children because they fear that the presence of children with special needs will disrupt their children's learning or hinder their social development (Una *et al.*, 2023).

Children with special needs are often seen as an unfortunate minority group that should be pitied, separated, or even excluded from society. This perspective is morally wrong and a major obstacle to regular schools' efforts to provide inclusive education. The opportunities for children with disabilities to develop, interact, and demonstrate their potential become increasingly limited when they are isolated and treated unfairly (Nuwa *et al.*, 2023).

Many people do not understand that the condition of these children is not the result of personal mistakes or sins of their parents, as is still believed by some people due to a lack of knowledge and direct interaction with children with special needs.

Due to this lack of understanding and ignorance, people tend to feel confused, afraid, or awkward when they have to respond to the presence of children with special needs, thus creating social distance that reinforces discrimination. This situation indicates that Indonesian culture is still not fully inclusive and welcoming toward children with special needs (Chrzanowska, 2024). Rejection still occurs subtly and openly in educational, social, and family environments. Building an equitable and inclusive education system for all children remains a significant challenge.

### 3.9. The Abilities and Awareness of Parents and The Community Regarding Children with Special Needs

Although Law Number 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities provides rights for children with disabilities, some parents have not fulfilled all of their rights, especially in terms of education, health, and protection from discrimination. Children with disabilities do not always have access to appropriate education or specialized services because weak family economic conditions often serve as the primary barrier to fulfilling children's rights (Miftakhul Jannah, 2020). In most cases, parents and the community still lack understanding of the rights and educational needs of children with disabilities. Due to the lack of disability-friendly information access and insufficient awareness campaigns, children with disabilities are still stigmatized and discriminated against (Una *et al.*, 2023).



Some members of the community view children with disabilities as “strange” or negatively different, leading them to tend to ignore or avoid interacting with children with disabilities. This highlights the importance of inclusive education in the community.

The community must recognize that children with disabilities have different potentials and the same right to quality education. Active community involvement in mentoring and support programs also helps reduce stigma and enhance social acceptance. However, changing societal paradigms and improving the capacity of parents and teachers to support inclusive education remain the greatest challenges (Rosada, 2020).

### 3.10. Curriculum Administration and Modification

To meet the needs of children with special needs, their learning patterns must be adapted to personalized education programs or individual learning programs.

Due to the different characteristics of children with special needs, teachers must have special skills. The monitoring of inclusive schools conducted by the Directorate of Special Needs Students shows that most teachers face difficulties conducting academic and non-academic evaluations and modifying the curriculum (Wardani, 2022).

This will certainly affect how children with special needs are served in inclusive schools. Additionally, the numerous administrative responsibilities of schools make teachers feel overwhelmed. Service reports, reports for special education teachers, funding administration, and data collection required for functional assessment procedures are some of the challenges school administrators face regarding children with special needs (Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021). (Holmqvist & Lelinge, 2021). Teachers cannot accept students with special needs in their classes due to the burden they face (Jesslin & Kurniawati, 2020).

Schools can provide educational programs that are appropriate and challenging but tailored to the abilities and needs of each student, as well as assistance and support that teachers can provide to help students achieve success (Marisana & Herawati, 2023).

Inclusive schools must meet the following criteria: (i) the school is ready to provide inclusive education programs in collaboration with the school committee, principal, teachers, students, and parents; (ii) there are students with special needs in the school; (iii) Special education teachers (SETs) are available. SETs are teachers with a background in special education or exceptional education, or who have received training in extraordinary education in inclusive schools; (iv) Commitment to completing compulsory education; (v) Having a network of collaboration with relevant institutions; (vi) Support facilities that are easily accessible to all students; and (vii) The school has gained a broad understanding of (Susilowati *et al.*, 2022)

### 3.11. Stakeholder Collaboration

Parents are important figures who must understand their children's development to identify, encourage, or intervene early if their children have developmental problems. Many parents still consider children with special needs to be a source of shame or disgrace to their families (Tias Pratiwi *et al.*, 2022).

Parents prefer to keep children with special needs away from others rather than providing interventions that could help them live independently and socialize well in society. Parents who know more about the needs of children with special needs are not ashamed and can accept their presence well. However, some parents still struggle to obtain accurate information, leaving them unsure of what to do (Yunita *et al.*, 2019).

The immediate environment also challenges children with disabilities to learn at home. Children with disabilities will not be able to become independent individuals if their upbringing makes them

feel like victims who must be pitied and helped continuously. The primary goal of inclusive education for children with special needs is not to force them to be like everyone else; rather, education aims to help them become independent individuals who can fully utilize their strengths (Rahayu, 2015).

Educational institutions, particularly early childhood education (PAUD) institutions, are the second most important stakeholders after parents, and they can play a significant role in identifying children with special needs at an early age. PAUD learning programs tailored to children's developmental stages in terms of motor skills, social-emotional development, language, and communication are a very important reference for identifying children with special needs at an early age (Ndek *et al.*, 2023; Aguh & Olutola, 2023; Wahyuni *et al.*, 2021; Agarry, 2022; Yusuf *et al.*, 2023; Sopekan, 2024; Albion *et al.*, 2021; Salman & Yahaya, 2025; Wijaya *et al.*, 2022).

PAUD activities such as routine health checks and providing healthy supplementary food are not limited to. The Education Department has additional power to enforce the law as policymakers and implementers. Increasing the availability of public facilities and infrastructure suitable for children with special needs. In the long term, the government must seriously train all teachers in Indonesia to handle children with special needs.

With these efforts, the number of inclusive schools in Indonesia will continue to increase yearly. Many people do not know what an inclusive school is. An inclusive school is not a special school or one that accepts children with autism. Essentially, an inclusive school is a school that accepts children with special needs and provides them with the opportunity to learn alongside regular children through a learning program tailored to each child's unique abilities (Puspitaningtyas, 2020).

The old paradigm of teachers regarding the need for different services for each child must begin to change to achieve true inclusive education. Additionally, human resources in schools must be well-prepared. Teachers and educational institutions must fully understand what an Individualized Education Program entails. The main points are in the following:

- (i) The main stakeholders supporting early identification of children with special needs are health agencies, which optimize the functioning of maternity hospitals, community health centers, and integrated health service posts. Recapitulation of health examination records at each network institution under the health agency can serve as a source of initial data for early identification of children with special needs. Health workers can also be key in encouraging pregnant women to pay attention to their children's health.
- (ii) Psychology Bureau/Therapy Institutions: Psychology institutions, especially therapy institutions, can serve as partners in conducting more scientific profiling of children with special needs who have already been identified. In addition, these psychology and therapy institutions can serve as important partners for parents and schools in handling and supervising the implementation of intervention programs for children with special needs.
- (iii) Community: There are still many people who view children with special needs as "strange people" who attract attention, are subjects of discussion, or even objects of abuse and discrimination. The perception that children with special needs are second-class citizens remains strong in society. However, their self-confidence has significantly improved due to societal acceptance of them. Society must give children with special needs more opportunities to showcase their strengths (Cabatay & Gonzales, 2024).

### 3.12. The impact and Effectiveness of Inclusive Schools for Students with Special Needs

Students with special needs can reduce social challenges with the support of natural peers. When classmates better understand the uniqueness and needs of their friends, they tend to be more open and responsive to differences.

Inclusive methods can help students with special needs avoid social isolation in traditional schools. Talking about an inclusive environment means physically and socially accepting students

with special needs. Active and responsive involvement from teachers and classmates helps create a supportive environment where every student feels welcomed and has an important role in the school community (Hidayati & Warmasyah, 2021).

Inclusive schools effectively create an equitable and meaningful learning environment for students with special needs. These schools enhance students' social awareness and interaction skills, which are crucial for holistic development.

Therefore, the growth and expansion of inclusive education must continue to be promoted so that more students with special needs can benefit from it (Fahrul & Ahmad, 2023). Positive academic development indicates that inclusive education effectively provides equal and meaningful education. Inclusive learning can enhance the abilities of students with special needs through individual support, learning adjustments, and collaboration between inclusive teachers and special education support staff (Nadhiroh & Ahmadi, 2024).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

As mandated by the 1945 Constitution and Law Number 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities, inclusive education in Indonesia aims to realize equal educational rights for children with special needs through their integration into regular schools. Although the number of inclusive schools has increased significantly (from 35,802 in 2021 to 44,477 in 2023), and the number of children with special needs in regular schools has also increased, implementing inclusion faces many challenges.

Limited numbers of teachers trained in inclusive education, insufficient supporting facilities, and discrimination and bullying against children with special needs are all examples of shortcomings in service quality. Policies such as Government Regulation Number 13 of 2020 have not been fully implemented due to educational institutions' lack of an inclusive culture.

This situation is exacerbated by unequal access, parental readiness, and limited supporting infrastructure. Detailed important points are in the following:

- (i) Lack of teacher capacity, both in terms of specific pedagogical competencies to develop curriculum modifications and in dealing with significant administrative burdens related to children with special needs services;
- (ii) Lack of accessible and disability-friendly facilities;
- (iii) Lack of effective cooperation between stakeholders, especially between regular teachers and special assistant teachers, as well as between schools and parents of children with special needs.

From a socio-cultural perspective, this is one of the main operational challenges. Parents and the general public still lack understanding of the rights and possibilities of children with special needs. Additionally, economic factors often hinder the fulfillment of the basic rights of children with special needs.

Four pillars of solutions must be fulfilled. The first is strengthening policies and budgets to ensure that laws are consistently enforced; the second is improving the quality and quantity of teachers through continuous and intensive inclusive training; the third is providing adequate and disability-friendly educational facilities; and the fourth is changing the paradigm through anti-discrimination campaigns and inclusive education.

#### 5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

## 6. REFERENCES

- Adesokan, A., and Bojuwoye, O. (2023). Teachers' perceived barriers to inclusive education. *ASEAN Journal of Community and Special Needs Education*, 2(2), 91-96.
- Agarry, R.O. (2022). An evaluation of early childhood educators' knowledge of their professional code of conduct. *Indonesian Journal of Multidiciplinary Research*, 2(2), 401-408.
- Aguh, J.C., and Olutola, A.T. (2023). Examining the challenges of early childhood education in Nigeria. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Research and Technology*, 3(2), 91-96.
- Ainscow, M., and Miles, S. (2008). Making education for all inclusive: Where next?. *Prospects*, 38(1), 15-34.
- Ainscow, M., and Miles, S. (2008). Making education for all inclusive: Where next?. *Prospects*, 38(1), 15-34.
- Albion, L., Kaira, M.R., Tawami, T., Fairuz, D.A., and Maulana, H. (2021). Designing English education game application for early childhood. *ASEAN Journal of Science and Engineering Education*, 1(2), 117-124.
- Al Shaban Radi, H.M., and Hanafi, Z. (2024). Managing visually impaired students: Factors that support and inhibit inclusive programs in elementary. *Indonesian Journal of Community and Special Needs Education*, 4(1), 19-28.
- Anggreni, N. M. D. A., dan Valentina, T. D. (2015). Penyesuaian psikologis orangtua dengan anak down syndrome. *Jurnal Psikologi Udayana*, 2(2), 185-197.
- Azizah, N., Prasetyo, A.C., Dini, N., Wulandari, V., and Kruesa, M. (2022). Social inclusive education project (SIEP) as a community for handling children with special needs in rural areas. *Indonesian Journal of Community and Special Needs Education*, 2(2), 89-98.
- Baxtiyor, A.S., and Sardor, E.D. (2024). Transforming special and inclusive education: Leveraging information technologies for enhanced learning. *ASEAN Journal of Community and Special Needs Education*, 3(2), 95-104.
- Cabatay, M. M., and Gonzales, H. B. (2024). Disaster prevention and risk reduction education implementation in special education schools in Indonesia: Teachers' challenges, strategies, and recommendations'. *Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Indonesia*, 12(1), 216-231.
- Chrzanowska, I. (2023). Educational space in inclusive education—challenges in working with a diverse group/class. *Lubelski Rocznik Pedagogiczny*, 42(4), 59-75.
- Damayanti, D., dan Rismaningtyas, F. (2021). Pendidikan berbasis responsif gender sebagai upaya meruntuhkan segregasi gender. *Jurnal Analisa Sosiologi*, 10, 60-75.
- Darma, I. P., dan Rusyidi, B. (2015). Pelaksanaan sekolah inklusi di Indonesia. *Prosiding penelitian dan pengabdian kepada masyarakat*, 2(2), 223-227.
- Faddillah, R.N., Nandiyanto, A.B.D., and Bilad, M.R. (2022). Literacy program for elementary school students about inclusive education in recognizing children with special needs. *ASEAN Journal of Community and Special Needs Education*, 1(1), 1-8.

- Fahrul, A., dan Ahmad, M. R. S. (2023). Diskriminasi pendidikan (studi kasus pada anak berkebutuhan khusus di kabupaten kepulauan selayar). *Jurnal Sosialisasi: Jurnal Hasil Pemikiran, Penelitian dan Pengembangan Keilmuan Sosiologi Pendidikan*, 1(1), 121-132.
- Fatmawiyati, J., dan Permata, R.S.R.E. (2022). Implementasi Pendidikan Inklusif di PAUD. *Flourishing Journal*, 2(8), 567-582.
- Florian, L. (2014). What counts as evidence of inclusive education?. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 29(3), 286-294.
- Francisco, M. P. B., Hartman, M., and Wang, Y. (2020). Inclusion and special education. *Education Sciences*, 10(9), 238-255.
- Glushchenko, V.V. (2025). Formation of the methodology of the project-activity game in inclusive higher education. *Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 5(1), 53-58.
- Gumilang, R. M., dan Irnawati, I. (2022). Dimensi budaya penerimaan orang tua terhadap anak berkebutuhan khusus (ABK). *Pusaka*, 10(1), 110-124.
- Hanifah, D. S., Haer, A. B., Widuri, S., dan Santoso, M. B. (2021). Tantangan anak berkebutuhan khusus (ABK) dalam menjalani pendidikan inklusi di tingkat sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat (JPPM)*, 2(3), 473-483.
- Herawati, N. I. (2016). Pendidikan Inklusif. *EduHumaniora/ Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Kampus Cibiru*, 2(1), 1-11.
- Hernández-Saca, D. I., Voulgarides, C. K., and Etscheidt, S. L. (2023). A critical systematic literature review of global inclusive education using an affective, intersectional, discursive, emotive and material lens. *Education Sciences*, 13(12), 1212.
- Hidayati, W. R., dan Warmansyah, J. (2021). Pendidikan inklusi sebagai solusi dalam pelayanan pendidikan untuk anak berkebutuhan Khusus. *Aulad: Journal on Early Childhood*, 4(3), 207-212.
- Holmqvist, M., and Lelling, B. (2021). Teachers' collaborative professional development for inclusive education. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 36(5), 819-833.
- Irawati, I. (2020). Urgensi pendidikan multikultural, pendidikan segregasi dan pendidikan inklusi di Indonesia. *Instructional Development Journal*, 3(3), 177-187.
- Jannah, A. M., Setiyowati, A., Lathif, K. H., Devi, N. D., dan Akhmad, F. (2021). Model layanan pendidikan inklusif di Indonesia. *Anwarul*, 1(1), 121-136.
- Jannah, M. (2020). Studi deskripsi: Perekonomian orangtua anak berkebutuhan khusus terhadap pendidikan anak berkebutuhan khusus. *Special and Inclusive Education Journal*, 1(1), 49-58.
- Jesslin, J., dan Kurniawati, F. (2019). Perspektif orang tua terhadap anak berkebutuhan khusus di sekolah inklusif. *Jurnal Pendidikan Inklusi*, 3(2), 72-91.
- Khudayshukurovna, K.S., Asror, S.F., Nusrat, N.M., and Adamboy, M.K. (2024). Pedagogical and psychological factors for ensuring the sustainability of inclusive education in Uzbekistan. *ASEAN Journal of Community and Special Needs Education*, 3(2), 115-126.
- Kikabhai, N. (2022). How educational systems respond to diversity, inclusion and social justice: Disability, power, discipline, territoriality and deterritorialization. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 73(4), 685-698.



- Kriswanto, D., Suyatno, S., dan Sukirman, S. (2023). Penyelenggaraan pendidikan inklusif di sekolah dasar: Analisis faktor-faktor dan solusi yang ditawarkan. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 7(5), 3081-3090.
- Kurniawati, F. (2021). Exploring teachers' inclusive education strategies in rural Indonesian primary schools. *Educational Research*, 63(2), 198-211.
- Latifah, I. (2020). Pendidikan segregasi, mainstreaming, Integrasi dan inklusi, apa bedanya?. *Jurnal Pendidikan*, 29(2), 101-108.
- Mangku, D. G. S. (2021). Legal protection for women and children with disabilities in Indonesia. *Jurnal Magister Hukum Udayana (Udayana Master Law Journal)*, 10(1), 1-14.
- Marisana, D., dan Herawati, N. I. (2023). Pengaruh kompetensi guru dalam proses pembelajaran inklusi di sekolah dasar. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 8(3), 5072-5087.
- Musayaro, S., Asmiati, N., Utami, Y.T., Mulia, D., Sidik, S.A., Abadi, R.F., Pratama, T.Y., Maslahah, S., and Pramudyo, A.S. (2023). A digital accessibility and inclusive design-based e-module in higher education: Does it work in a classroom with a deaf student?. *ASEAN Journal of Community and Special Needs Education*, 2(1), 55-60.
- Muslihasari, A. (2023). Pendampingan orang tua melalui talk to heart dalam mengembangkan kemampuan bina diri ABK berbasis keluarga. *Jurnal Edukasi Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 2(2), 75-85.
- Nadhiroh, U., dan Ahmadi, A. (2024). Pendidikan inklusif: Membangun lingkungan pembelajaran yang mendukung kesetaraan dan kearifan budaya. *Ilmu Budaya: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, Dan Budaya*, 8(1), 11-22.
- Ndek, F. S., Lulu, M. J., Bate, M., dan Weo, M. S. (2023). Peran fasilitas pendidikan dalam meningkatkan pembelajaran anak berkebutuhan khusus. *Jurnal Pendidikan Inklusi Citra Bakti*, 1(1), 39-49.
- Nuwa, A. A., Ngadha, C., Longa, V. M., Una, Y., dan Wau, M. P. (2023). Mengenali dan memahami karakteristik pada anak berkebutuhan khusus di tingkat Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Pendidikan Inklusi Citra Bakti*, 1(2), 191-202.
- Oktamovna, K.M., and Ruslanovna, K.T.A.M.B. (2024). Overcoming barriers and implementing best practices in inclusive higher education: Strategies for accessibility, equity, and student support. *ASEAN Journal of Community and Special Needs Education*, 3(2), 105-114.
- Prasetyo, I., Nugroho, A.A., Damayanto, A., and Fathoni, M.I. (2025). Developing an inclusive ICT-based academic information system using REST API to promote Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in higher education. *ASEAN Journal of Science and Engineering*, 5(2), 395-416.
- Pratiwi, L. T., Maghfiroh, M. N., Andika, D. S., Marcela, I. N., and Afifah, A. F. (2022). Permasalahan yang dihadapi dalam pelaksanaan sekolah inklusi di Indonesia. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Flobamorata*, 3(2), 314-318.
- Puspitaningtyas, A. R. (2020). Implementasi pembelajaran inklusi bagi anak berkebutuhan khusus. *Jurnal IKA PGSD (Ikatan Alumni PGSD) UNARS*, 8(1), 39-47.
- Putra, I. E. D., and Neviryani, S. (2023). Identifikasi Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus di Sekolah Inklusi: Studi Awal. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 7(1), 202-212.

- Rahayu, S. M. (2015). Memenuhi Hak Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus Anak Usia Dini Melalui Pendidikan Inklusif. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak*, 2(2), 1-9.
- Rosada, A. (2019). The effectivity of empathic love therapy to increase subjective well-being and teacher readiness in inclusive school. *Al-Bidayah: Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar Islam*, 11(2), 248-263.
- Salman, A.A., and Yahaya, O. (2025). Perception of early childhood education lecturers on the use of virtual learning. *ASEAN Journal for Science Education*, 4(1), 31-38.
- Sari, Z. P., Sarofah, R., and Fadli, Y. (2022). The implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia: Challenges and achievements. *Jurnal Public Policy*, 8(4), 264-269.
- Sopekan, O.S. (2024). Implementing peace education concepts in early childhood curriculum: A tool for addressing violence and promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. *Indonesian Journal of Multidiciplinary Research*, 4(2), 259-266.
- Susilowati, T., Trisnamansyah, S., dan Syaodih, C. (2022). Manajemen pendidikan inklusi dalam meningkatkan mutu pendidikan. *JlIP-Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan*, 5(3), 920-928.
- Ummah, R., Safara, N. S. T., Kurnilasari, A. R. U., Dimas'udah, H. R., dan Sukma, V. A. M. (2023). Tantangan atau hambatan dalam menerapkan pendidikan inklusi. *Jurnal Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, 2(1), 111-118.
- Una, L. M. W., Beku, V. Y., Soro, V. M., dan Laksana, D. N. L. (2023). Pendekatan layanan pendidikan bagi anak berkebutuhan khusus. *Jurnal Pendidikan Inklusi Citra Bakti*, 1(2), 148-158.
- Wahyuni, F.A., Rinekasari, N.R., Jubaedah, Y., and Boonsong, S. (2021). Designing home-based childcare program for stimulating social-emotional development in early childhood. *Indonesian Journal of Multidiciplinary Research*, 1(1), 113-116.
- Wardani, M. A. K. (2022). Implementasi modifikasi kurikulum upaya pengembangan kemampuan bersosialisasi pada anak Autism. *Jurnal Kependidikan Islam*, 12(2), 148-158.
- Watkins, M. (2009). "Inclusive education: The way of the future" —A rebuttal. *Prospects*, 39(3), 215-225.
- Widiyanto, W. E., dan Putra, E. G. P. (2021). Pendidikan jasmani adaptif di sekolah inklusif bagi anak berkebutuhan khusus. *Sport Science And Education Journal*, 2(2), 28-35.
- Wijaya, S., and Nandiyanto, A.B.D. (2022). Weather and Its effect learning on digital-based early childhood education students. *ASEAN Journal of Community Service and Education*, 1(1), 69-76.
- Woodcock, S., Sharma, U., Subban, P., and Hitches, E. (2022). Teacher self-efficacy and inclusive education practices: Rethinking teachers' engagement with inclusive practices. *Teaching and teacher education*, 117, 103802.
- Yunita, E. I., Suneki, S., and Wakhyudin, H. (2019). Manajemen pendidikan inklusi dalam proses pembelajaran dan penanganan guru terhadap anak berkebutuhan khusus. *International Journal of Elementary Education*, 3(3), 267-274.
- Yunusovna, F.U., Bakhromjon, M.S., and Akhmadali, A.U. (2024). Individualized assessment strategies for students with special needs in inclusive classrooms. *ASEAN Journal of Community and Special Needs Education*, 3(2), 127-136.

Yusuf, S., Abdulkareem, H.B., and Popoola, B.O. (2023). The impact of quality early childhood education centers on pre-schoolers' social interaction. *Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 3(2), 181-190.