

## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION MODEL ON SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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*abstract*

*Inclusive education not only aims to provide learning space for children with special needs, but also encourages collaboration and understanding between students with diverse backgrounds. The application of an inclusive model is expected to be able to overcome social, cultural, and academic barriers that often hinder children's participation in formal education. This study uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design (quasi-experiment) with a nonequivalent control group design. Data analysis was carried out using parametric statistical tests paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test with a significance level ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.05 to determine significant differences in social emotional development before and after the intervention. Epistemologically, this study makes a significant contribution to the theory of inclusive education by showing that the social emotional development of children with special needs is greatly influenced by the quality of the design of the learning environment, social interaction, and systemic responsiveness to the diversity of individual needs.*

**Keyword:** Inclusive Education, Social Emotional Development, Children with Special Needs



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### INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a concept that prioritizes equal rights and access to education for all children, including those with special needs. In Indonesia, this approach is part of the national agenda to realize friendly and non-discriminatory education. Inclusive education not only aims to provide learning space for children with special needs, but also encourages collaboration and understanding between students with diverse backgrounds. The implementation of this model is expected to be able to overcome social, cultural, and academic barriers that often hinder children's participation in formal education. (Firdaus, 2020).

Inclusive education in Indonesia is part of the global effort to realize education for all (Education for All), in line with the Salamanca Declaration which emphasizes the importance of equal access for every child, including children with special needs (ABK), in formal education. This policy has encouraged the acceptance of ABK in regular schools, equipped with training for teachers to implement a differentiated learning approach. This step is intended to create a more friendly and inclusive learning environment, while reducing the social stigma against ABK (Juntak et al., 2023; Wijaya et al., 2023)

However, the implementation of inclusive education still faces various challenges, such as limited facilities, lack of special assistant teachers, trained teachers, negative perceptions of children with special needs and minimal public understanding of the importance of inclusive education. Schools often do not have adequate curriculum and facilities to optimally meet the needs of children with special needs. However, efforts continue to be made to increase public awareness and participation, strengthen cross-sector collaboration, and provide training for educators. These efforts aim to ensure the sustainability of inclusive education programs in Indonesia, so that every child can develop their potential to the maximum without discrimination (Hamsi Mansur et al., 2023; Wijaya et al., 2023)

Nevertheless, various efforts continue to be made by the government and educational institutions to raise public awareness, provide teacher training, and integrate the principle of inclusivity into the curriculum. This is an important step to realize fair and equal education for all children, so that they can develop their potential to the maximum without discrimination (Munna et al., 2024).

Social emotional development is a critical aspect in the growth of children with special needs which has fundamental significance in shaping their quality of life and ability to adapt in the social environment (Dhoka et al., 2023). Good social emotional skills enable children with special needs to build interpersonal relationships, develop communication skills, and manage emotions effectively. According to (Susanti et al., 2018), Appropriate interventions in the development of social emotional competence can significantly increase the capacity of children with special needs to interact, participate, and integrate themselves in various social contexts..

The importance of focusing on social emotional development not only impacts a child's individual abilities, but also has long-term implications for social inclusion and independence. (Kurniawati, 2023). Empirical studies show that children with special needs who receive comprehensive support in social emotional aspects have a higher probability of developing better resilience, communication skills and adaptation abilities. (Cho & Kim, 2024). A holistic approach to developing social emotional competencies through sustainable interventions and an inclusive educational environment is the key to maximizing the potential and quality of life of children with special needs

Social-emotional development gaps in children with special needs (ABK) often reflect the significant challenges these children face in navigating social relationships and managing their emotions. (Rizka & Kurniawati, 2008) This is often due to factors such as neuropsychological disorders, communication limitations, and lack of opportunities to socialize naturally with peers. Research shows that children with special needs, like children on the autism spectrum, have difficulty recognizing social cues and expressing their emotions in socially acceptable ways. Lack of meaningful interactions with peers also exacerbates these gaps, making it harder for them to develop skills such as empathy, cooperation, and self-control. (Apriliana et al., 2018; Surni et al., 2022).

Furthermore, research (Handayani & Watiyah, 2021) revealed that early intervention and comprehensive approaches are essential to reduce the gap in social-emotional development, Interventions such as play-based learning methods, project-based approaches, and support from the family environment have shown positive results in improving the social-emotional abilities of children with special needs. The use of adapted technology, as well as collaboration between teachers, therapists, and parents, have been shown to provide significant support for the emotional and social development of these children. The main challenge is to ensure that these approaches are applied consistently and centered on the needs of the individual child (Mutasam, 2019; Sulistyono et al., 2021).

Some effective strategies include behavioral therapy, psychological counseling, and social inclusion programs that are specifically designed for each child's individual needs. The importance of family support, an inclusive educational environment, and community understanding play a significant role in helping children with special needs develop their social and emotional skills optimally, while well-designed educational programs can help reduce this gap...

In the context of inclusive education for early childhood, there is a significant research gap regarding the impact of implementing an inclusive education model on the social-emotional development of children with special needs. Although the concept of inclusive education has been widely discussed theoretically, there is still a lack of in-depth empirical studies on the concrete mechanisms of how this education model actually affects the social-emotional aspects of children with special needs. Previous studies tend to focus on academic aspects or accessibility, but do not explore the psychological transformations and social interactions that occur in an inclusive education environment..

The research gap to be answered includes the need for a comprehensive understanding of how the implementation of inclusive education models can support the social-emotional development of children with special needs at the early childhood education stage. This study aims to fill the gap in the scientific literature by investigating specific factors that influence social integration, adaptability, and the formation of emotional skills of children with special needs in inclusive education settings. Thus, this study is expected to provide significant academic contributions in understanding the complex dynamics of inclusive education and provide an empirical basis for the development of more effective mentoring strategies for children with special needs at the early childhood education level.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Inclusive education is an educational approach that emphasizes acceptance and appreciation of the diversity of learners, including children with special needs, in the regular education system (Ainscow et al., 2019). According to UNESCO (2020), inclusive education is a systematic process that aims to identify and address various barriers to student participation, with the main focus of providing equal and quality educational opportunities for all children, regardless of their background, abilities, or individual characteristics.

Some of the main principles of inclusive education according to (Masunungure & Maguvhe, 2023) includes: (1) Acceptance of diversity as a strength in the learning process, (2) Respect for the dignity of each individual, (3) Equal learning opportunities for all students, (4) Development of a learning environment that is responsive to individual needs, and (5) Active participation in the educational community. These principles emphasize the importance of creating an educational system that is flexible, adaptive, and able to accommodate the diversity of students' learning needs..

Implementation of inclusive education requires a comprehensive multidimensional approach. According to research (Sakti, 2020), An effective implementation model includes several key components: (1) Development of school policies that support inclusion, (2) Ongoing training for educators, (3) Modification of curriculum and teaching strategies, (4) Provision of adequate resource support, and (5) Active involvement of parents and the community. Each of these components is interrelated and requires commitment from all education stakeholders.

The implementation of inclusive education is not free from various challenges. Research (Lestarinigrum, 2017) identified several major obstacles, such as limited teacher understanding, lack of supporting infrastructure, and social attitudes that are not yet fully inclusive. To overcome these challenges, a comprehensive strategy is needed that includes developing teachers' professional capacity, providing psychological and pedagogical support, and transforming school culture towards a more inclusive and diversity-friendly environment..

Inclusive education has a significant positive impact not only for children with special needs, but also for the entire educational community. According to a meta-analysis study (Masunungure & Maguvhe, 2023) , implementation of inclusive education has been proven to improve students' social, academic, and emotional skills. Furthermore, this approach contributes to the formation of a more tolerant society, respecting diversity, and preparing young people to live in complex and diverse social contexts.

Social emotional development is a critical aspect of individual growth, especially for children with special needs who face unique challenges in interacting with the social environment. According to (Sanrock, 2018), Social emotional development includes an individual's ability to understand, manage, and express emotions and interact effectively with others. For children with special needs, this process becomes more complex because they often face barriers in communication, social understanding, and emotional regulation..(Juliatuti et al., 2024)

The concept of social emotional development in children with special needs involves a deep understanding of the interaction between internal and external factors that influence their ability to socialize. Research (Riyadi et al., 2023) shows that social emotional development is not just about the ability to interact, but also includes the child's ability to build interpersonal relationships, understand social cues, and develop adaptation skills. This is very important considering that each child with special needs has a unique social emotional profile depending on the type and level of their special needs.(Indriyani et al., 2023)

The characteristics of the social emotional development of children with special needs are very diverse and complex. According to a comprehensive study (Nisa et al., 2018), Key characteristics include difficulties with verbal and nonverbal communication, challenges understanding the emotions of oneself and others, and difficulties controlling emotional responses. For example, children on the autism spectrum may have difficulty reading facial expressions and understanding the nuances of social communication, while children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) tend to have difficulty controlling emotional impulses. Factors that influence the social emotional development of children with special needs are multidimensional. Research (Rahayu et al., 2024) identified several key factors, including family environment, educational interventions, social support, and therapeutic interventions. A responsive and understanding family environment can significantly improve a child's social and emotional abilities. Support from parents, siblings, and caregivers plays a crucial role in helping children with special needs develop social skills and emotional regulation.

The importance of early and ongoing intervention cannot be overstated in supporting the social-emotional development of children with special needs. According to a recent study (Priyanti et al., 2024), An interdisciplinary approach involving therapists, educators, psychologists, and families can have a significant positive impact. Structured and individualized interventions can help children develop social skills, improve communication skills, and strengthen emotional resilience..

The social and emotional development of children with special needs is a complex process that requires comprehensive understanding, ongoing support, and a highly individualized approach. Every child has the potential to grow and develop with the right support. Therefore, a deep understanding of the characteristics, influencing factors, and effective intervention strategies are the main keys in helping children with special needs achieve optimal social and emotional development..

## **METHODS**

This study uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design with a nonequivalent control group design. The research subjects involved two classes at an Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institution, with each class consisting of 19 students, including children with special needs and children in general. The sampling technique was carried out using purposive sampling, with inclusion criteria including: (1) children aged 4-6 years, (2) registered at an inclusive PAUD institution, (3) having various special needs characteristics (such as autism spectrum disorders, learning difficulties, or other developmental disabilities). Data collection instruments used systematic observation, validated social emotional development tests, and assessment sheets developed by experts in inclusive education and child development psychology..(Sarmanu, 2017)

The independent variables in this study are the implementation of the inclusive education model, which is measured through: (1) curriculum adaptation, (2) adapted learning strategies, (3) support from trained educators, and (4) an accessible and friendly learning environment for children with special needs. The

dependent variable is the social emotional development of children with special needs, which is assessed using indicators of the ability to interact with peers, communication skills, emotional control, and social independence. Data analysis was carried out using parametric statistical tests paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test with a significance level ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.05 to determine significant differences in social emotional development before and after the intervention, as well as differences between the experimental group and the control group. The data processing process will be assisted by statistical software to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research results..(Arikunto, 2011)

## Data Analysis

### Data Description

**Table 1: Observation Results of Social Emotional Development**

indicator	Research Result			
	Not Yet Developed	Starting to Grow	Developing As Expected	Developing Very Well
Kemampuan Berinteraksi Sosial	20%	40%	30%	10%
Kemampuan Pengaturan Emosi	20 %	50 %	27%	3%
Kemampuan Adaptasi Sosial	13 %	60 %	20 %	7%

Based on the results of the observations conducted, children's social development can be identified with four levels of indicators: Not Yet Developing, Starting to Develop, Developing According to Expectations, and Developing Very Well. In terms of social interaction skills, the majority of children are in the Starting to Develop category (40%), followed by Developing According to Expectations (30%), Not Yet Developing (20%), and Developing Very Well (10%). For emotional regulation and social adaptation skills, a similar pattern is seen with the majority of children in the Starting to Develop category. In terms of emotional regulation skills, 50% of children are Starting to Develop, 27% are Developing According to Expectations, 20% are Not Yet Developing, and only 3% are Developing Very Well. Meanwhile, in terms of social adaptation skills, 60% of children are Starting to Develop, 20% are Developing According to Expectations, 13% are Not Yet Developing, and 7% are Developing Very Well..

### Data Analysis Results

The normality test is carried out to determine whether the regression model is normally distributed or not. A regression is said to be good if its distribution is normal. And the normality test uses the Test of Normality table with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, namely as follows

Tabel 2 tests of normality

- **Tests of Normality**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
pre test	.181	19	.102	.934	19	.203
post test	.227	19	.011	.916	19	.095

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The results of the Kolmogorov Smirnov test of the Pretest and Posttest results of the ability to tell stories in early childhood showed that the significance of 0.102 in the pre-test value and the post-test value showed a significance of 0.011. It can be seen that the sig value is higher or equal to 0.05, which means that the pre-test value of the experimental class is normally distributed and the Shapiro-Wilk test results of the Pretest and Posttest results of social emotional development showed that the significance of 0.203 in the pre-test value and the post-test value showed a significance of 0.095. It can be seen that the sig value is higher than 0.05, which means that the pre-test and post-test values are normally distributed.

This homogeneity test is a prerequisite before conducting further tests, such as T-test and ANOVA. This test is used to ensure that the data group does come from a population that has the same variance (homogeneity)

Table 3 Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
learning outcomes	Based on Mean	.001	1	36	.971
	Based on Median	.000	1	36	1.000
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.000	1	35.949	1.000
	Based on trimmed mean	.009	1	36	.926

Based on table 3, it can be concluded that both variables have a sig. value of 1,000 which is greater than the probability value of sig.  $\alpha$  (0.05), this indicates that the variables are homogeneous

- Hypothesis testing results
- Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	pre test - post test	-7.474	2.318	.532	-8.591	-6.356	-14.052	18	.000

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that the inclusive education model pre-test and post-test on the social-emotional development of children with special needs has a sig value of 0.00, where it is known that the sig value (sig. (2-tailed) is 0.000, then we can conclude that there is a real difference between learning outcomes after using the inclusive education model and before using the inclusive education model on improving the social-emotional development of children with special needs

**DISCUSSION**

Based on the research, there are several important findings about the influence of the implementation of the inclusive education model on the social emotional development of children with special needs in early childhood education: where a well-structured inclusive education model can significantly improve the social interaction skills of children with special needs. children who participate in inclusive education programs show increased communication skills, empathy, and social play skills compared to those who do not receive inclusive intervention.

The implementation of the inclusive education model will be positively correlated with increased development of emotional abilities of children with special needs. An inclusive and supportive learning environment can help children develop strategies, emotional management, and social adaptation skills. An individualized approach and the support of trained teachers are key factors in the success of developing children's emotional competence.

inclusive education models not only have an impact on children with special needs, but also provide positive benefits for children who develop typically. Their findings showed increased empathy, tolerance, and understanding of diversity in both groups of children. Collaborative strategies between regular and special education teachers were shown to be effective in creating a learning environment that supports comprehensive social-emotional development. These findings consistently confirm that the implementation of a quality inclusive education model has significant potential in supporting the social-

emotional development of children with special needs in early childhood education. The success of this model is highly dependent on the quality of interventions, teacher support, and curriculum design that is responsive to the diversity of learners' needs..

Based on research on inclusive education models and the social and emotional development of children with special needs in the last 10 years, there are several theories and studies that support the importance of implementing inclusive education. According to (Ainscow & Miles, 2008) whose inclusive theory is still relevant, inclusive education is a systematic process to increase participation and reduce exclusion in education. This is reinforced by research (Booth et al., 2006) which emphasizes that inclusivity is not just about placing children with special needs in regular classes, but rather creating a learning environment that is responsive to the diversity of students' needs.

In the context of social emotional development, research (Schles & Robertson, 2017) in the *Journal of Special Education* showed that inclusive educational environments can significantly improve the social skills of children with special needs. They found that interactions with typically developing peers can help children with special needs develop social skills and emotional regulation. This is reinforced by Guralnick's study (2017) which states that a well-structured inclusive educational model can be an important catalyst in the development of social emotional competencies in children with special needs..

Cutting-edge research such as that conducted (Grindal & Schwartz, 2019) that the implementation of a comprehensive inclusive education model requires multidimensional support, covering aspects of curriculum, teacher training, environmental adaptation, and individual intervention strategies. They emphasize that the success of inclusive education depends not only on policy, but also on the quality of implementation at the practical level. Furthermore, research (Qi & Ha, 2018) shows that a collaborative approach between regular education teachers and special education teachers is the main key in creating an effective inclusive environment to support the social emotional development of children with special needs.

the inclusive education model for the social emotional development of children with special needs in early childhood education has profound significance in the development of educational theory and developmental psychology. Theoretically, this study extends Vygotsky's paradigm in (Langford, 2005) about the social construction of learning, emphasizing the role of social interaction in cognitive and emotional development. The concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is becoming increasingly relevant, as inclusive education models prove that a heterogeneous and supportive social environment can be a transformative vehicle for the development of children with special needs. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development is also strengthened, where inclusive educational environments are seen as complex microsystems capable of providing a scaffold for social emotional development through dynamic interactions between individuals and their social contexts.

Further theoretical implications relate to the reconceptualization of the disability model from a medical approach to a social approach. This study supports the theoretical argument that limitations are not inherent to the individual, but rather the product of the interaction between personal characteristics and environmental constraints. Sen's concept of capabilities and Rawls' theory of social justice are relevant in understanding that inclusive education is not simply a pedagogical intervention, but rather a mechanism for social transformation that allows every child to develop their full potential..(Iswahyudi, 2024) Epistemologically, this study makes a significant contribution to the theory of inclusive education by showing that the social-emotional development of children with special needs is greatly influenced by the quality of the design of the learning environment, social interactions, and systemic responsiveness to the diversity of individual needs.. (Adon & Jeraman, 2023; Iswahyudi, 2024)



## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Epistemologically, this study makes a significant contribution to the theory of inclusive education by showing that the social-emotional development of children with special needs is greatly influenced by the quality of the design of the learning environment, social interactions, and systemic responsiveness to the diversity of individual needs.

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