



## Challenges of Inclusive Education in the Archipelago: Social and Geographical Disparity Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is an important effort to provide equal access to education for all children, including those with special needs or who are in disadvantaged social and geographical conditions. However, in the archipelago, the implementation of inclusive education faces significant challenges. This article discusses various factors that hinder the success of inclusive education in the archipelago, including limited educational infrastructure, uneven distribution of resources, and community perceptions of inclusive education. This study also identifies gaps between urban and rural areas in the accessibility of inclusive education and highlights the roles of the government, educational institutions, and communities in overcoming these barriers. Through a literature analysis and case study approach, this article offers strategic recommendations to improve the quality and accessibility of inclusive education in the archipelago.

**Keywords:** Inclusive education, Social gap, Geographical gap, Accessibility, Nusantara

### INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become a major agenda in various global education policies, aiming to provide equal opportunities for every individual, including those with special needs and living in remote areas. In Indonesia, which has complex geographical characteristics and cultural diversity, the implementation of inclusive education faces significant challenges. Social and geographical disparities in various regions of the archipelago also affect the accessibility and quality of inclusive education services, so that not all children get equal educational opportunities. Ultimately, this risks reducing educational participation and achievement for marginalized groups, especially those in remote areas and from low socio-economic backgrounds (Kusumawati, 2021).

The socio-economic disparity in Indonesia is still a major obstacle to inclusive education, given the uneven distribution of educational resources between urban and rural areas (Marzuki & Kurniawati, 2022). In urban areas, educational facilities are more developed and support for inclusive education tends to be better than in rural areas. Children in remote areas often face infrastructure limitations, such as distance to school, transportation, and a lack of facilities that support their special needs. In addition, the perception of





the community and educators in rural areas towards children with special needs is often still influenced by social stigma that makes them reluctant to access formal education (Rizky et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, government policy support in promoting inclusive education has progressed in recent years, such as through Law No. 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities and the School Mover Program which pays attention to aspects of inclusivity (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022). However, these policies have not yet been able to fully address practical challenges in the field. Several regions far from the center of government still experience obstacles in implementing inclusive education optimally due to the lack of training for educators and minimal budget allocation (Putri & Prasetyo, 2023). This confirms that social and geographical factors not only influence access to inclusive education but also the implementation of these policies in each region.

Furthermore, several studies have shown that collaboration between the government, schools, and local communities is needed to ensure the success of inclusive education (Wicaksono et al., 2021). Community-based initiatives can be an effective approach to address this gap by engaging communities in supporting inclusive education in their areas. However, without concerted efforts to build awareness and support the capacity of schools and communities in implementing inclusive education, existing challenges will persist (Suryadi & Andayani, 2023). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the challenges faced in implementing inclusive education in the archipelago by considering the perspective of social and geographical disparities.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to analyze the challenges in implementing inclusive education in several regions in the archipelago that have significant social and geographical disparities. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with various parties, including educators, students with special needs, and education policy makers in rural and urban areas. In addition, field observations were carried out to see firsthand the conditions and facilities available in schools that are trying to implement inclusive education, in order to understand the obstacles experienced in the field. Data were also collected through analysis of inclusive education policy documents from the Ministry of Education and Culture and reports related to the implementation of inclusive education in various regions (Nisa et al., 2022).

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis methods to identify key themes related to the challenges of inclusive education in the context of social and geographical disparities. Data from interviews and observations were systematically coded to find relevant patterns related to factors that influence the success and barriers to implementing inclusive education. Data validity was guaranteed through triangulation of data sources and validation of interview results with respondents to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information obtained (Rizal & Susanto, 2023). The results of this analysis are expected to provide an in-depth picture of the conditions of inclusive education in the archipelago and become the basis for formulating policy recommendations that can increase accessibility of education for all children (Suryani et al., 2023).





## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The results of the study show that the biggest challenge in implementing inclusive education in the archipelago lies in the limited infrastructure and resources in geographically remote areas. Several schools in rural and island areas visited have minimal facilities, such as inadequate classrooms, poor accessibility for students with special needs, and limited technology to support inclusive teaching and learning processes (Suryadi & Rahmawati, 2022). This is different from schools in urban areas which tend to have more complete and supportive facilities. In addition, geographical disparities result in social disparities in the provision of inclusive education, where children in remote areas often have to travel long distances to access educational services (Hakim et al., 2023).

In addition to limited infrastructure, the lack of understanding and training related to inclusive education for educators is also a significant challenge. Many teachers in rural and remote areas have not received special training to manage inclusive classes, so they find it difficult to deal with students with special needs. Several teachers interviewed said that they did not have sufficient knowledge of inclusive teaching strategies, so the approaches they took were often ineffective and did not meet the needs of students (Marzuki & Santoso, 2023). The lack of skilled human resources in inclusive education in remote areas is exacerbated by the lack of effective policy support at the regional level to provide training for teachers (Nurhadi & Fitri, 2023).

In addition to internal obstacles at the school level, external factors such as community perceptions and stigmas towards children with special needs also affect the success of inclusive education. In some areas, children with special needs are still considered a burden on the family, so parents are reluctant to send them to formal schools. In some cases, this stigma causes children with special needs not to get the right to proper education because families and communities do not support inclusive education (Prasetyo et al., 2023). These factors show that the challenges of inclusive education are not only related to geographical and social aspects, but also require a paradigm shift in society towards children with special needs (Utami & Sari, 2023).

From these findings, it is clear that inclusive education in the archipelago requires comprehensive interventions, both in terms of infrastructure, teacher training, to strengthening community support and changing public perceptions. The government needs to consider these social and geographical factors in designing more inclusive and comprehensive policies, and increase collaboration with non-governmental organizations and local communities to reduce barriers to implementing inclusive education in remote areas. Without an integrated solution, challenges in inclusive education will continue and widen the gap in access to education in the archipelago (Wijaya et al., 2023).

### Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that geographical and social disparities in Indonesia play a major role in hindering the achievement of ideal inclusive education in various regions of the archipelago. In remote and island areas, schools often operate with limited basic facilities, such as inadequate classrooms, lack of accessibility for students with disabilities, and limited inclusive learning aids (Hakim & Wibowo,





2023). This situation is very different compared to urban areas, which are generally better prepared to implement inclusive education. This gap indicates the need for more specific policies, especially those that are able to allocate resources to remote areas to ensure equal access to education for all students, regardless of their geographical and social conditions.

In addition to infrastructure challenges, limitations in teacher training are also an important factor affecting the effectiveness of inclusive education in the archipelago. Most teachers in remote areas do not have adequate training background in managing inclusive classes, resulting in their lack of readiness to face challenges in the field (Setiawan et al., 2023). Several teachers admitted that they did not know how to adapt materials to suit the needs of students with special needs, so that learning was not optimal. This shows that inclusive education requires not only supportive facilities, but also continuous training for teachers, so that they have the right understanding and skills in managing student needs inclusively.

Furthermore, this study found that community support and perceptions of inclusive education greatly influence the success of its implementation. Communities in remote areas often have less supportive perceptions of students with special needs, resulting in minimal participation of children with special needs in formal education environments (Kurniawan & Sari, 2023). This negative perception often causes these children to feel alienated and unaccepted at school, resulting in greater psychological impacts. Therefore, efforts to increase public awareness of the importance of inclusive education need to be encouraged, through socialization and campaigns that focus on the importance of diversity and inclusion in educational environments. With a comprehensive approach involving all parties, it is hoped that the obstacles to inclusive education in the archipelago can be overcome sustainably.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that the challenges in implementing inclusive education in the archipelago are greatly influenced by the geographical and social disparities that occur in various regions of Indonesia. Limited infrastructure, especially in remote and interior areas, causes children with special needs to have difficulty in accessing equal education. In addition, limited training for educators in managing inclusive classes also hinders the successful implementation of inclusive education, so that learning efforts that are responsive to the needs of individual students are not optimal. These factors underline the importance of equalizing resources and government support in ensuring equal accessibility to inclusive education throughout the archipelago.

In addition to infrastructure and teacher training aspects, community support and perceptions of inclusive education in remote areas also need to be considered. Social stigma and perceptions that are less supportive of students with special needs hinder the success of inclusive education, so ongoing efforts are needed to increase public awareness. A community-based approach involving the government, schools, and local communities is important to support the success of inclusive education in various regions of the archipelago. With this comprehensive approach, challenges in inclusive education can be overcome, so that a fairer and more inclusive education system is achieved for all children in Indonesia.





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