

# PERCEPTION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORTS AND HEALTH TEACHERS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE PRACTICES: A CASE STUDY IN CENTRAL LOMBOK DISTRICT

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the attitudes of physical education teachers towards the inclusion of students with physical disabilities or physical disabilities in physical education learning programs in Elementary Schools. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method. The subjects of this study were physical education teachers in Gugus 1 Praya Tengah; as many as 5 Physical Education, Sports, and Health teachers were directly involved in this study, consisting of 4 men and one woman with an average teaching experience of 12.5 years. The object of this study is the implementation of physical education learning programs in elementary schools, which are incredibly inclusive services for people with physical disabilities. Data collection techniques used in this study were interviews, observations, and documentation. The main instrument in this study was the interview guideline, while the additional instrument was the observation guideline. The research data analysis technique used the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model. Teachers argue that physical education classes are a good place for developing students with disabilities. They realize that students with disabilities can get the same opportunity to participate in physical education programs and develop social skills. Teachers recognize that the seminars or professional training provided are very lacking. This study has significant impacts in encouraging ongoing training for physical education educators to improve their ability to implement inclusive education and in the development of adaptive curricula that meet the needs of students with special needs. This study also emphasizes the importance of stronger collaboration between teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. In addition, the findings of this study open up opportunities for further research in creating adaptive physical education learning models that are appropriate to the local context and can be used as guidelines for more efficient inclusive education policies and practices.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Until now, inclusion remains a major agenda and policy for the world of education and is a challenging issue for teachers to respond to across subject communities and at every level of education. This is also part of

the central objective of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Inclusion, inclusive education, and the educational theory on which these ideas are built are major challenges for teaching practices and the organization of school administration and training. More specifically in physical education, existing research is more directed at the practice of injustice in learning services. For this reason, the role of physical education teachers in schools as facilitators of inclusion and managers of inclusive educational environments is crucial.

Physical education is one of the most important subjects in a curriculum at the Elementary School (SD), Middle School (SMP), and High School (SMA) levels. Physical education is developed for students in a planned, directed, continuous manner, based on curriculum standards and programs designed to develop motor skills, knowledge and active living behavior, physical fitness, sportsmanship, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence (Couturier et al., 2013). Quality physical education will be a gateway to lifelong physical activity, increased health awareness, and increased community involvement contributing to social inclusion (McLennan & Thompson, 2015). The document published by UNESCO shows that inclusion is an integral and essential feature of quality program development and pedagogy. The publication of this guideline also reflects, however, that addressing inclusion remains a significant challenge for the field and profession of physical education.

Adaptive physical education is a physical education program that is specifically designed to provide appropriate and appropriate services as the development and implementation of physical education programs for students with special needs or disabilities (Sherrill, 2004; Steadward et al., 2003; Winnick, 2005). Adaptive physical education has the same aims and objectives as physical education in general; however, the importance and priority of these same aims and objectives must vary and be based on the needs of students with special needs or disabilities. The adaptive physical education program aims to improve the motor skills, physical fitness, and social skills of children with special needs through various physical activities adapted to individual abilities and needs. Adaptive physical education is essential in supporting children with special needs development. With the right learning strategies, practical evaluation, and support from teachers and parents, adaptive physical education can significantly improve these children's quality of life. Further research is needed to overcome existing challenges and improve the implementation of this program throughout Indonesia.

While studies have demonstrated the benefits of inclusion in physical education programs (An & Meaney, 2015; Bertills et al., 2018; Pan & Mcnamara, 2020), teachers have also expressed concerns about the instructional and environmental barriers that exist to including students with disabilities in general physical education programs (An & Meaney, 2015; Dillon et al., 2020; Qi et al., 2017). Another issue that has emerged is that many physical education teachers are not well trained to meet the needs of students with disabilities or special needs in inclusive physical education classes despite inclusion being a general education policy (Jin et al., 2013). Other findings suggest that students without disabilities avoid interacting with students with physical impairments, and are less accepting and less willing to befriend students with disabilities or special needs (Edwards et al., 2019). Students with special needs or disabilities can be successfully included in general physical education programs when and if they are given adequate support (Block & Obrusnikova, 2007a; Block & Vogler, 1994). Therefore, it is very necessary to have very intense and efficient communication, involvement, and collaboration for all stakeholders involved in inclusive physical education.

Inclusive education theory emphasizes the importance of collaboration, curriculum adaptation, and management of the learning environment to support students with special needs. However, previous research has revealed a gap between theory and practice. For example, many physical education teachers do not receive sufficient training to understand the concept of adaptive physical education. Hence, the needs of students with disabilities are often not optimally met. This study focuses on the attitudes of physical education teachers in Lombok towards inclusion to explore issues of implementation and development of more inclusive physical education programs. This study also serves as a basis for developing new policies to support Central Lombok as an inclusive district.

After almost a decade of the declaration of Central Lombok Regency as an inclusive district, of course, there are still many things that need to be improved regardless of what has been done. The implementation of inclusion in education programs is also not easy to do, including in physical education learning programs. Teachers play an important role and are the spearheads in the practice of implementing inclusive physical education, so it is a big challenge for teachers to realize it. As a basis for realizing new policies and programs in inclusive physical education learning practices, a study is needed on how sports teachers view inclusion to provide special insight into the general attitudes of teachers towards inclusive and inclusive practices in the general school curriculum.

## 2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method that aims to describe the phenomenon objectively and in detail, then analyze it to identify patterns, relationships, and analysis relevant to the study's focus or research. This approach was chosen to gain a deep understanding of Physical Education

teachers' perceptions towards the inclusive practices of students with disabilities in the Physical Education learning process in schools. In this design, the researcher also uses triangulation techniques to strengthen the database's reliability and validity by comparing it to various data sources, methods, and times.

The subjects of this study were elementary school teachers who teach in Central Praya Cluster 1, Central Lombok, which consists of five public elementary schools, namely SD Negeri 2 Batu Nyala as the core school, and four impact schools, namely (SD Gerengeng, SD Lajut, SD Selebung, and SD Negeri 1 Batu Nyala. The teachers who were the subjects of this study were selected using purposive sampling based on their teaching experience in the context of inclusive education to ensure that they have direct relevance in this study, consisting of 4 men and one woman with an average teaching experience of 12.5 years so that with this experience they have understood the dynamics of physical education learning including in an inclusive context.

Various data were collected to measure teachers' perceptions of inclusive education, such as knowledge and understanding of inclusion, readiness to teach students with disabilities, challenges they encounter and face, and strategies to manage inclusive classes. The data were collected through in-depth interviews using semi-structured interviews with interview guides that included various open-ended questions to explore teachers' experiences, views, and reflections on inclusive physical education practices. Then, participatory observation was conducted by directly observing the implementation of physical education learning in inclusive classes to record teacher-student interactions, learning strategies, and student responses. In addition, document studies such as lesson implementation plans (RPP), activity programs, and learning evaluations should be conducted to determine the extent to which inclusive elements are applied to the teaching and learning process. The main instruments used in this study were interview guides and observation sheets designed to map relevant qualitative data with the support of other documents as complements.

The three main stages consist of data analysis carried out using the Miles and Huberman interactive model: (1) Data Reduction: Documents, observations, and interviews are selected, balanced, and based on themes relevant to the focus of the study; (2) Data Presentation: To provide a systematic overview of the findings, the reduced data is arranged in the form of diagrams, matrices, and narratives; (3) Conclusion Drawing: Patterns and relationships in the data are identified and compared with the theoretical framework of inclusion and previous research. To ensure the validity of the results, triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and document investigations. In addition, time triangulation was also used to obtain consistent information by collecting data at different time intervals.

### 3. RESULTS

The study showed many relevant findings on how physical education teachers view and consider implementing inclusive education in elementary schools. The data was collected through participant observation, document analysis, and in-depth interviews. The results of these three approaches were compared to increase the validity of the results. From the in-depth interviews, teachers stated that they understood the basic concept of inclusion. However, they said they did not receive the technical training needed to change the learning methods for students with special needs, such as students with disabilities. For example, teacher A admitted that lack of resources and unclear implementation directions were the main problems. Teacher D, the only woman in the group, emphasized that working with an exceptional assistant teacher was essential for the success of inclusive learning.

The results of the participant observation strengthened the interviews. It was clear that teachers had tried to change how they taught, including changing sports equipment and paying more attention to students with physical disabilities. However, evidence showed that students with special needs were more often observers than fully involved in mainstream class activities. This suggests a difference between how people understand the concept of inclusion and how they implement it in the field. Supporting documents, such as lesson plans (RPP), show that only a few changes have been made to meet the unique needs of students. Most of the RPPs are still general and do not fully meet the principles of inclusive education. However, some teachers plan to provide individual attention in their additional notes.

Data triangulation shows alignment between observations, documents, and interviews. To support the success of physical education for all students, including students with special needs, this study emphasizes ongoing training and the creation of a more inclusive curriculum. This is because all three data sources consistently show that, despite initial efforts to implement inclusive education, there are still shortcomings in terms of teacher training, management of the learning environment, and availability of resources. Data triangulation shows alignment between observations, documents, and interviews. To support the success of physical education for all students, including students with special needs, this study emphasizes ongoing training and the creation of a more inclusive curriculum. This is because all three data sources consistently show that, despite initial efforts to implement inclusive education, there are still shortcomings in terms of teacher training, management of the learning environment, and availability of resources.

Furthermore, in the results of this study, two themes emerged from the content analysis of teacher perceptions: (1) Beneficial but facing obstacles, and (2) increasing one's professional knowledge and collective experience. These themes are supported by subthemes illustrated using the words of teachers.

### **3.1. Positive, But There Are Obstacles**

Instructors thought that kids with impairments may thrive in physical education lessons. It was acknowledged that individuals with impairments might benefit equally from physical education classes and social skill development. Teachers acknowledged these advantages, but they also voiced concerns about environmental and pedagogical hurdles that prevent children with disabilities from participating in mainstream sports programs. The social benefits of inclusive physical education for kids with and without disabilities were highly acknowledged by all teachers. Instructors stressed the value of inclusive education policies' ability to provide disabled students with community engagement and social skill development opportunities. Teachers noted that connections with peers who have impairments, such helping out in physical education classes, are crucial to the educational experience of kids without disabilities. Teachers voiced worries over obstacles to integrating kids with impairments in physical education programs after acknowledging beneficial outcomes. These obstacles included teachers' poor execution of inclusive physical education programs, bullying, unfavorable peer attitudes, a lack of parental support, and a lack of specialized equipment. Teachers primarily noted implementation-related obstacles when it came to inclusive physical education programs. Instructors talked about their shortcomings in terms of their incapacity to instruct and their lack of support for teaching. Although they stated that they intended to teach children with disabilities, there were numerous challenges and worries in the teaching and learning process of inclusive physical education due to the absence of professional techniques or tactics. For instance, planning group activities was cited by all teachers as one of the biggest challenges they faced in the classroom. Because they thought that grouping had the biggest influence on the learning process, the majority of teachers planned to employ grouping for physical activities. Teachers, however, found it challenging to place kids with special needs in small groups in their lessons.

### **3.2. Improving Professional Understanding and Group Experience**

The second element pertains to augmenting one's professional knowledge and collective experience, which is in line with the role that educators play in providing physical education programs for kids with disabilities. Every instructor stated that they welcome all kids to their classrooms and use physical education to teach them, including the students who are marginalized in the classroom (disabled students, for example). Teachers stated that in order for inclusion to be successful, they needed seminars or professional training related to the physical education subject. They said that participating in these workshops or trainings could help them execute inclusive physical education programs more effectively. Nonetheless, educators discovered how inadequate the provided seminars and professional development were.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

This study's results align with previous studies' findings, which showed that physical education teachers in Gugus 1 Praya Tengah understand the concept of inclusion fundamentally. However, they found many challenges and opportunities to implement it, especially related to the lack of training and necessary resources. In recent years, the concept of integrating children with impairments into general education classes has gained traction in several nations. The idea of inclusive education is a continuous effort that attempts to end child discrimination in all of its manifestations and provide high-quality education to everyone (UNESCO, 2017). With an emphasis on the necessity for educational systems to adapt and reach all students, rather than the other way around, inclusive education takes a socio-ecological perspective to the relationship between student capacities and environmental demands (Göransson et al., 2017; Nilholm & Göransson, 2017; Walker et al., 2018). The use of inclusive education methods enables students with disabilities attending their local schools to obtain educational assistance in general education classrooms alongside their peers without impairments (Messiou, 2017).

One of the main problems identified is the low level of curriculum adaptation in the lesson plan (RPP). This study shows that modifying the RPP to meet the needs of students with physical disabilities is still very limited. The physical education curriculum is often not designed to accommodate students with special needs, so teachers have difficulty adjusting the learning process in inclusive classes. Based on the results of observations, some teachers seemed to try to adapt learning tools and methods, such as modifying sports equipment for students with disabilities. However, students with special needs are still often less actively involved in core learning activities. Students without special needs usually avoid interacting with students with special needs, which results in social barriers in an inclusive learning environment. The foundation of inclusion is the idea that all children, including those with disabilities and those with typical circumstances, should have access to school services regardless of their circumstances (Kuntjoro et al., 2022; Widyawan, 2020). While

inclusion is frequently associated with disabilities, it can also refer to a wider range of disabilities, including those related to gender, sexual orientation, color, age, ethnicity, and more (Messiou, 2019; Messiou & Ainscow, 2020). According to Hodkinson (2010), inclusion in this sense would cover all pupils, regardless of differences (Hodkinson, 2011, 2015). To ensure that all children have an equal educational experience, inclusion aims to place students with disabilities in classrooms alongside their counterparts without impairments (Głodkowska, 2020).

Using a range of theoretical and methodological approaches, previous researchers have examined issues related to inclusive education (Ewing et al., 2018; Florian, 2019; Paseka & Schwab, 2020). The field of physical education has also encountered new opportunities and challenges in the inclusion of students with disabilities. Many approaches have been taken worldwide to address the inclusion process in the context of physical education (Lieberman et al., 2020). For instance, the United States (NCLD, 2006) has a legislative definition of general physical education that stipulates that all children with disabilities are entitled to free physical education services. In order to encourage inclusive physical education practices, a number of guidelines have also been produced (Block & Obrusnikova, 2007a). Numerous evaluations of the effects of inclusion procedures on physical education instructors have been carried out, and the results show how much more assistance and training they require for practice provision as well as curriculum design (Lautenbach & Antoniewicz, 2018; Qi & Ha, 2012; Tant & Watelain, 2016). In order to provide effective educational responses, physical education teachers must exhibit pedagogical competence, be fully engaged in lifelong learning, and guarantee that all students are present, participate, are acknowledged, accepted, and learn and perform in a setting free from violence (Pérez-Gutiérrez et al., 2022; Rodríguez Herrero et al., 2023).

The findings of this study also emphasize the importance of more significant support from stakeholders, such as training for teachers, collaboration with special assistant teachers, and the provision of supporting facilities. The success of inclusive physical education is highly dependent on adequate support, both in terms of infrastructure and cooperation between the parties involved. Research on inclusive physical education has yielded several important themes, including the following: the experiences and knowledge that students gain from social inclusion in the classroom (Hovdal et al., 2021); the promotion of social acceptance and inclusion in the classroom (O'Neil & Olson, 2021); inclusive education in the classroom from the viewpoint of individuals with disabilities (Grenier et al., 2017); and the development of a self-efficacy instrument for physical education teachers toward inclusion (Block & Obrusnikova, 2007b). On the other hand, the socio-cultural viewpoint in Indonesia has not been discussed. To find the best ways to support inclusion in mainstream sports environments, more research is required on the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of physical education teachers toward the inclusion of students with disabilities.

The declaration of Central Lombok as an inclusive district, which has been in effect for nearly a decade, provides a significant opportunity to enhance the implementation of inclusive education. However, this study indicates that its impact on physical education practices still requires improvement. Inclusion extends beyond merely integrating students with special needs into regular classrooms; it also involves fostering a learning environment that supports their participation and success. Consequently, the findings of this research contribute to the literature on the challenges and requirements associated with implementing inclusive physical education, particularly within the local context of Indonesia. These results underscore the necessity for intensive training for teachers, the development of adaptive curricula, and the strengthening of collaboration among teachers, students, and the school community to achieve effective inclusive education.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Teachers' conceptions of variables that can favorably impact the inclusion of students with disabilities in physical education programs. Three categories of training materials were distinguished from this group of variables in order to assist PE teachers in making their instruction more inclusive and approachable. The following research perspectives are based on these training materials. It would be interesting to carry out a study to compare the representations and attitudes of PE teachers and their colleagues who teach other disciplines with regard to multidisciplinary training. Survey-based quantitative research may be taken into consideration. In terms of disciplinary didactic training, it would be beneficial to look into the opinions of PE teachers regarding the modifications and variations in their didactic choices and teaching content (disability-specific sports programs, adaptations of mainstream sports, individual goals, etc.) that they believe are required to guarantee the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classes. After providing instructors with an overview of the various disabled students, including their age and the kind and degree of their disability, a qualitative method using interviews may be helpful in expressing the opinions of the teachers and providing justification for their educational decisions. Finally, regarding pedagogical disciplinary training, it would be interesting to observe the different types of teaching (classroom climate, intervention styles, use of cooperative learning, use of peer tutoring, etc.) that PE teachers can implement. Multiple case studies with post-session observations and interviews can add a wealth of information to analyze teaching practices.

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