



Teachers' Knowledge and Understanding Toward Learning-Friendly Education for Children with Disabilities in Inclusive School

Permata Primadhita Nugraheni* ; Abdul Salim; M. Furqon Hidayatullah

Department of Special Education, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia
Email: permata196@gmail.com

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Abstract

Children with disabilities are commonly defined by a child that requires special needs in their everyday life aspects. They may have extensive needs in education, social, healthcare, and psychological health. Children with disabilities have the rights to be educated in various placements, from special school to inclusive school alongside their normal peers. An inclusive school being called learning-friendly when all of the elements of Learning-Friendly school environment that are already been established are addressed. Every member of inclusive school should acknowledge those elements, including the teacher. The aim of this research is to evaluate the teachers' knowledge and understanding about learning-friendly education among inclusive school under the purview of The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affair. This study was using a quantitative research method. The data collection technique used is a rating scale with 18-item questions. The result of this research found that most of the teachers (89%) showed a moderate to low level of knowledge and understanding about learning-friendly inclusive education for children with disabilities. While another 11% of teachers had a good knowledge about the concept of friendly education for children with disabilities. Overall, teacher's knowledge and understanding are in moderate to low level. Furthermore, there is a need to improve teachers' knowledge and understanding about friendly-education for children with disabilities in inclusive school.

Keywords: Children with Disabilities; Inclusive School; Learning-Friendly Education

Introduction

Children with disabilities are those who require special support to do activities of daily life. Those children also need special services in educational, health, social care, psychological health care, and other disability-related services. There are four categories of children with disabilities, including children with physical, social, mental, and emotional impairment. Special needs children are children who differed in their physical, mental, and social behavior (Abdullah., 2013). Children with disabilities facing challenges associated with their disabilities. Special needs children as stated by Maftuhatin (2014) differed significantly to their typically developing peers. The condition requires them for having special educational services to achieve their full potential. Special needs children often deprived of their physical, mental, intellectual, social, and emotional which affect significantly to their developmental milestones. Indonesian Ministry of Women Empowerment and Childs' Protection define children with disabilities as

a condition of being limited physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally which significantly affect their developmental status. From above definitions, it can be concluded that children with disabilities are those children with physical, mental, social, and emotional impairments which requires special support in educational, health, social care, and psychological health care services.

Children with disabilities require educational services which meet their basic learning needs. They have the right to be educated within various placements from special school to inclusive school. The term inclusive school means that children with disabilities are educated among their regular peers within the same school. Praptingrum (2010) stated that inclusive education is an educational service system which requires integrating children with disabilities in the regular school nearby with their same-age peers. The implementation of inclusive education provides a flexible, joyful, and friendly environment which affect positively to the self-concept of student with disabilities, regular student, and teacher. Whilst, Maftuhati (2014) defined inclusive education as a strategy to provide an opportunity for children with disabilities to get high-quality education within the same school as any other children that meet their needs. Meanwhile, Tylor (2006) described inclusion as serving students with a full range of abilities and disabilities in the mainstream classroom with appropriate in-class support. From above definition, the term inclusive education implies that children with disabilities are educated in regular school alongside their typically developing peers with appropriate services regarding their basic learning needs.

Inclusive school required to provide appropriate educational services to meet the need of children with disabilities, as the result a learning-friendly school is formed. UNESCO has developed a framework called Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environment. In this framework, the definition of learning-friendly school is that every child has the right to learn to develop their fullest potential within a safe and welcoming environment. It encourages the engagement and active participation of every school member organically. The purpose of this research is evaluate the knowledge and understanding of teacher about creating learning-friendly environment for children with disabilities in inclusive school reviewed from Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environment (ILFE) established by UNESCO.

Methodology

This was a descriptive quantitative research aimed to evaluate the teachers' knowledge and understanding about learning-friendly school environment for children with disabilities. The research instrument was designed into 18 questions. The questionnaire was validated by using expert judgments method. Secondary data collected through observation in inclusive schools under the purview of The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affair located in Surakarta City.

The participants for this study were 30 teachers from inclusive secondary school within the Surakarta City Area. A quantitative descriptive analysis was performed from the data collected through questionnaire to determine the knowledge teachers held about learning-friendly school environment using SPSS 20. Scores were calculated based on the preference levels the teacher received. The level of knowledge categorized into low knowledge, moderate knowledge, and good knowledge. The findings obtained from questionnaire completed by the teacher adjusted to the findings obtained through observation.

Results

Inclusive school teacher was given questionnaire to assess their knowledge and understanding about learning-friendly for children with disabilities in inclusive school. From the data analyzed, it is known that the teachers mostly had a fair knowledge about learning-friendly school for children with disabilities, with the average score of 8,9. Based on the data, we found that 89% of participants were

having a moderate-to-low level, and another 11% of participants had a good level of knowledge about learning-friendly school. The respondents who possessed good knowledge identified as the teacher with more experience in implementing inclusive education principle. It means those teachers had already acknowledged the concepts of learning-friendly school environment for children with disabilities.

Following table is the result of the analysis on the knowledge and understanding of the teacher in inclusive school under the purview of The Ministry of Religious Affairs about learning-friendly school for children with disabilities.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of teachers' knowledge

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Knowledge	18	5	14	161	8,94	2,532
Valid N (listwise)	18					

The data on teachers' knowledge and understanding about learning-friendly school for children with disabilities, categorized into three sub-categories is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Frequency per categories of teachers' knowledge

Score	Category	Subject	
		Freq.	Percent.
$X < 7$	Low	2	11%
$7 \leq X \leq 12$	Moderate	14	78%
$12 > X$	High	2	11%

Table 2 shows that the knowledge and understanding of teachers' about learning-friendly school environment for children with disabilities under the purview of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs mostly is in moderate level (78%). Whilst, the other 11% of the teacher have low knowledge, and another 11% have good knowledge about learning-friendly school environment for children with disabilities. In conclusion, this study revealed that most of the teachers exhibit a low level of knowledge and understanding about learning-friendly inclusive education for children with disabilities.

Discussion

The data results reveal that teacher in inclusive school exhibit low knowledge and understanding about learning-friendly for children with disabilities. The teacher has not yet fully understood about the appropriate learning-friendly environment for children with disabilities. The lack of knowledge on teacher about learning-friendly school environment for children with disabilities is one factor caused ineffective implementation of learning-friendly school.

As mentioned in Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environment toolkit established by UNESCO (2007) there are eight key aspects in creating learning-friendly environment for students with disabilities in inclusive school as follows: 1) School policies and Administrative support; 2) School environment; 3) Teachers' skills, knowledge, and attitudes; 4) Teachers' competencies development; 5) Students; 6) Academic Content and Assessment; 7) Special Subject Areas/ Extracurricular Activities, and 8) Community.

This research sought to evaluate the teachers' knowledge and understanding in inclusive schools about learning-friendly environment for children with disabilities. From eighteen respondents, it is found that more than half (89%) of the teachers have a moderate level of knowledge. Meanwhile, the others teachers' knowledge is in good-level. Schools with more experience and time in adapting inclusive school had more teachers with good knowledge about learning-friendly environment for children with disabilities.

Some of the factors which caused teachers' lack of knowledge include; the school that has just implemented inclusive education system, and the teachers' lack of competencies and that they never been dealt with children with disabilities before. Forlin & Chambers (2011) asserts the importance of teacher training before handling the student with disabilities. Weak preparation before implementing inclusive education system could result in the lack of teachers' knowledge and school effort in implementing learning-friendly inclusive school. Tarnoto (2016) reported that 16,67% teacher exhibit lack of knowledge about student with disabilities and inclusive school. Another finding from his study is that the teacher in inclusive school faces too many challenges in teaching the student with disabilities within the same classroom with regular student. In line with the Nimatuzahroh study (2015) who found that 44,6% teachers believe that their school are not yet ready to become inclusive. Moreover, 73,2% of the teacher believe that inclusion is a burden. Most of the regular schools still not yet ready to adapt inclusive education principle and believe that accepting children with disabilities in regular school is just a burden.

Knowledge about learning-friendly school is also influenced by the infrastructure facilities provided by the school in accommodating children with disabilities. The teacher has not fully understood appropriate infrastructure for children with disabilities. They believe the infrastructure they had were already supportive to meet the need of all students including student with disabilities. In fact, most of the infrastructure the school had was not eligible to accommodate students with disabilities. Tarnoto (2016) in her study found that 87,10% challenge faced by school in implementing inclusive principle is caused by the lacked of adequate infrastructure. This condition would result in teachers' lack of variation in the use of the instructional method. Whereas, students with disabilities require a variety of instructional method designed to meet their needs.

Another aspect of the learning-friendly school is teachers' attitude. There are still evidence that teacher in inclusive school hold a negative attitude toward children with disabilities. They believe that the presence of children with disabilities in their classroom will negatively affect regular student. Salamah (2015) stated that teachers' negative acceptance toward student with disabilities caused by their mental and emotional state. The lack of the teachers' knowledge and understanding about the student with disabilities and the concept of inclusive itself makes them hard to include students with disabilities within their classroom. Elisa & Wrastari (2013) study found that teacher more prefer the high-functioning student with disabilities to be included in the classroom. The low-functioning student with disabilities should also be facilitated by therapist or other paraprofessionals to support the classroom teacher. The teachers' lack of knowledge about children with disabilities would be a barrier in implementing the effective learning-friendly school.

Effective implementation of learning-friendly inclusive school can be achieved through the role of every school member, not only by the teachers, but also school psychologist, physical therapist, occupational therapist, special teachers, sign-language interpreter, and other professionals. School administrator and teacher should also be informed that in handling children with disabilities in inclusive school needs collaboration among professionals.

From the abovementioned discussion, it can be concluded that the knowledge and understanding of the teacher about learning-friendly school environment for children with disabilities is still needs improvement. It is shown from the findings of this study that most of the teachers (89%) were having

moderate knowledge. There are some factors which inhibit the lack of teachers' knowledge and understanding about learning-friendly school for the student with disabilities. One of the key factors is the low level of teacher knowledge on the concept of inclusive school. Moreover, the teacher also still exhibits negative acceptance toward student with disabilities to be included within their classroom.

Conclusion

A study investigating teacher knowledge and understanding about learning-friendly school environment for student with disabilities has been presented. It was found that teachers in inclusive school under the purview of The Ministry of Religious Affairs in Surakarta City generally (89%) have moderate-to-low level of knowledge. This finding indicates that the teachers has not fully acknowledged and understand how to create learning-friendly school environment in inclusive school for children with disabilities.

Suggestion

Based on the findings, it recommends that: the teacher requires more training to implement learning-friendly school environment for student with disabilities. Inclusive school administrator should also socialize the concept of learning-friendly school environment to their teacher. Varying the instructional method and materials, motivating the students regarding their potential, loosen the negative attitude toward children with disabilities should be considered as the requirement for teacher to work in an inclusive school.

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