

## Stakeholder Perceptions and Institutional Readiness for Inclusive Education Implementation: A Multi-Dimensional Analysis

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### Abstract

*Inclusive education implementation in Indonesia's regional cities faces significant challenges, particularly in bridging conceptual support with practical readiness. This study examines multi-dimensional public perceptions toward inclusive education in Palopo City, South Sulawesi, analyzing the relationship between conceptual understanding, implementation support, institutional readiness, and perceived benefits. A cross-sectional survey design was employed with 26 purposively selected stakeholders using a validated 30-item Likert scale questionnaire (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.89$ ). Data were collected during May-June 2024 and analyzed using descriptive statistics, mean comparison tests, and dimensional analysis. Findings revealed significantly high conceptual understanding ( $M = 4.115$ ,  $SD = 0.654$ ) and strong support for inclusive education principles ( $M = 4.423$ ,  $SD = 0.631$ ). However, institutional readiness showed concerning gaps, particularly in facility adequacy ( $M = 3.000$ ,  $SD = 0.832$ ) and teacher competency perceptions ( $M = 3.346$ ,  $SD = 0.829$ ). Dimensional analysis indicated substantial discrepancies between theoretical support (Conceptual Understanding: 4.115) and practical implementation readiness (Institutional Readiness: 3.476,  $p < 0.05$ ). While Palopo City stakeholders demonstrate robust conceptual support for inclusive education, critical implementation gaps exist in institutional infrastructure and human resource preparedness. These findings suggest urgent need for comprehensive capacity-building interventions targeting teacher training, facility enhancement, and systematic implementation support mechanisms..*

**Keywords:** inclusive education implementation; institutional readiness; stakeholder perceptions



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## Introduction

Inclusive education represents a fundamental paradigm shift in educational philosophy, moving from segregation and integration models toward comprehensive educational systems that accommodate all learners regardless of their abilities, disabilities, or special needs. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), ratified by Indonesia in 2011, mandates inclusive education as a human right, compelling national and regional governments to transform educational systems to ensure equitable access and quality education for all children.

Indonesia's commitment to inclusive education is embedded in various legislative frameworks, including Law No. 20/2003 on National Education System and Law No. 8/2016 on Persons with Disabilities, which explicitly guarantee equal educational opportunities for children with special needs. Despite these policy foundations, implementation challenges persist, particularly in regional contexts where resource constraints, infrastructure limitations, and varying stakeholder attitudes create complex barriers to effective inclusive education delivery.

Regional cities in Indonesia, such as Palopo in South Sulawesi Province, represent critical implementation sites for inclusive education policy translation into practice. Palopo City, with a population of approximately 156,000 and serving as an educational hub for the Luwu region, faces unique challenges in implementing inclusive education due to geographical isolation, limited specialized resources, and varying community preparedness levels. Understanding stakeholder perceptions in such contexts becomes crucial for developing contextually appropriate implementation strategies.

Previous studies in inclusive education have identified several key dimensions affecting implementation success. Conceptual understanding encompasses stakeholders' knowledge of inclusive education principles, legal frameworks, and philosophical foundations. Implementation support involves attitudes toward practical aspects of including children with special needs in regular educational settings. Institutional readiness refers to perceptions of organizational capacity, including teacher competency, facility adequacy, and administrative support systems. Benefits perception involves recognition of positive outcomes for all children, communities, and educational systems.

Research in Indonesian contexts reveals mixed findings regarding inclusive education implementation. Studies in urban areas demonstrate relatively higher implementation success rates, attributed to better resource availability and stakeholder preparedness. However, studies in regional contexts reveal significant challenges, including limited teacher training, inadequate facilities, and variable community support. These findings suggest that regional implementation contexts require specific attention and tailored intervention strategies.

This study addresses the identified research gap by examining multi-dimensional stakeholder perceptions toward inclusive education implementation in Palopo City, South Sulawesi. The research aims to analyze stakeholder perceptions across four key dimensions, identify specific areas of strength and concern, examine relationships between different perception dimensions, and provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing inclusive education implementation in regional contexts.

## Methodology

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to analyze stakeholder perceptions toward inclusive education in Palopo City. The research was grounded in a post-positivist philosophical approach, acknowledging the existence of objective reality while recognizing contextual influences on measurement and interpretation.

Palopo City, located in South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia, serves as the research setting. With a population of approximately 156,000, Palopo functions as a regional educational hub serving the broader Luwu region. The city hosts 89 elementary schools, 23 junior high schools, and 15 senior high schools, including both public and private institutions. The inclusive education landscape includes 12 schools officially designated as inclusive institutions since 2015, with approximately 89 children with identified special needs attending regular schools.

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants representing key stakeholder groups involved in inclusive education implementation. Inclusion criteria specified participants who held direct or indirect responsibility for educational decision-making, demonstrated basic knowledge of inclusive education concepts, resided or worked in Palopo City, and provided informed consent for research participation.

The final sample comprised 26 participants representing multiple stakeholder categories: educational administrators ( $n=7$ , 26.9%), teachers ( $n=8$ , 30.8%), parents of children with special needs ( $n=5$ , 19.2%), community leaders ( $n=4$ , 15.4%), and government officials ( $n=2$ , 7.7%). Participant ages ranged from 28 to 58 years ( $M=41.3$ ,  $SD=8.7$ ), with 53.8% female and 46.2% male representation.

The research instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire containing 30 items designed to measure stakeholder perceptions across four theoretically derived dimensions: Conceptual Understanding (6 items), Implementation Support (4 items), Institutional Readiness (8 items), and Benefits Perception (8 items). Additionally,

4 items assessed social and community support dimensions. Response format utilized a five-point Likert scale: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly Agree.

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with the overall instrument achieving  $\alpha = 0.89$ , indicating excellent reliability. Dimensional reliabilities were: Conceptual Understanding ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ), Implementation Support ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ), Institutional Readiness ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ), and Benefits Perception ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ).

Data collection occurred between May 15 and June 30, 2024, following institutional review board approval and informed consent procedures. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics and repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test for significant differences between perception dimensions. All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 28.0 with statistical significance set at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

## Results and Discussion

### *Participant Characteristics and Response Patterns*

The final sample (N=26) demonstrated strategically diverse representation across key stakeholder categories within Palopo City's educational ecosystem, reflecting the purposive sampling approach designed to capture multiple perspectives on inclusive education implementation. Stakeholder distribution included educational administrators (n=7, 26.9%), representing school principals and vice-principals from both public and private institutions; teachers (n=8, 30.8%), encompassing regular classroom teachers, special education teachers, and subject specialists; parents of children with special needs (n=5, 19.2%), providing crucial user perspective on service quality and accessibility; community leaders (n=4, 15.4%), including religious leaders, traditional leaders, and community organization representatives; and government officials (n=2, 7.7%), representing district education office personnel and policy implementers. This distribution ensures comprehensive stakeholder voice representation while acknowledging the limited population of informed stakeholders in the regional context.

Demographic analysis revealed participants aged 28-58 years (M=41.3, SD=8.7), indicating a mature, experienced cohort with substantial life and professional experience relevant to educational decision-making. Gender representation achieved near parity with 53.8% female and 46.2% male participants, reflecting Indonesia's gender balance in educational professions and community leadership roles. Educational qualifications were predominantly tertiary level, with 73.1% holding bachelor's degrees, 23.1% holding master's degrees, and 3.8% holding diploma certifications, indicating a highly educated sample capable of nuanced understanding of complex educational policy issues. This educational profile significantly exceeds Palopo City's general population statistics, where only 23% of adults have completed senior high school or higher education, confirming the purposive sampling strategy's success in identifying knowledgeable stakeholders.

Professional experience in education ranged from 6 months to 28 years (M=12.4, SD=7.9), demonstrating substantial collective expertise in educational systems and practices. Notably, 69.2% of participants reported direct involvement in special needs education through professional roles, family circumstances, or community engagement, providing credible foundation for informed perceptions about inclusive education implementation. Previous inclusive education training was reported by 42.3% of participants, with training duration ranging from one-day awareness workshops to semester-long certification programs offered by regional universities and NGOs. This training experience creates an important subgroup for comparative analysis, as trained participants may demonstrate different perception patterns compared to those without formal preparation. Geographic distribution within Palopo City showed representation from urban center areas (61.5%) and peripheral districts (38.5%), ensuring perspectives from different socioeconomic and infrastructure contexts within the municipal boundaries.

Comprehensive analysis of the 30-item instrument revealed mean scores ranging from 3.000 to 4.423 across individual items, indicating predominantly positive perceptions with notable variation that warrants detailed examination. The overall instrument mean was 3.845 (SD=0.584), suggesting generally favorable attitudes toward

inclusive education with substantial individual differences reflecting the complexity of stakeholder perspectives. Response distribution analysis showed 34.6% of all responses in the "Agree" category, 26.9% "Strongly Agree," 23.1% "Neutral," 11.5% "Disagree," and 3.9% "Strongly Disagree," indicating predominant support for inclusive education principles while revealing significant proportions of neutral and disagreeing responses. Missing data patterns were minimal, with completion rates of 100% across all participants and items, suggesting high engagement and understanding of the instrument content. Response consistency checks revealed acceptable patterns with no systematic response bias detected, and completion times averaged 18.7 minutes ( $SD=3.2$ ), indicating thoughtful consideration rather than hasty completion of the survey instrument.

### **Conceptual Understanding Dimension**

The Conceptual Understanding dimension emerged as the strongest area of stakeholder perception in this study, achieving the highest mean score among all four measured dimensions ( $M=4.115$ ,  $SD=0.654$ ). This superior performance indicates that Palopo City stakeholders possess strong foundational knowledge of inclusive education principles, suggesting that awareness-raising efforts and policy communication have been relatively successful in establishing theoretical understanding. The consistently high scores across this dimension provide an encouraging foundation for implementation efforts, as conceptual buy-in represents a critical prerequisite for successful inclusive education reform.

Analysis of individual items within this dimension revealed particularly strong endorsement of inclusive education's equity foundations. The highest-scoring item, "Inclusive education is important to ensure all children receive equal educational rights" ( $M=4.423$ ,  $SD=0.631$ ), garnered agreement or strong agreement from 84.6% of participants. This widespread recognition of educational rights as fundamental to inclusive education demonstrates that stakeholders clearly understand the human rights framework underpinning inclusion policies, aligning with Indonesia's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and national disability legislation.

The social justice dimensions of inclusive education also received strong recognition among stakeholders. The item "Inclusive education helps reduce discrimination against children with special needs" achieved the second-highest score within this dimension ( $M=4.192$ ,  $SD=0.785$ ), with an impressive 88.5% agreement rate. This finding suggests that stakeholders perceive inclusive education not merely as an educational intervention but as a broader social transformation mechanism addressing systemic discrimination and promoting societal acceptance of diversity. Such understanding reflects sophisticated awareness of inclusion's potential to challenge discriminatory attitudes and create more equitable social structures.

However, an interesting paradox emerged when examining stakeholders' self-assessment of their conceptual understanding. The item "I understand the concept of inclusive education" demonstrated relatively lower scores ( $M=3.846$ ,  $SD=0.784$ ) compared to other items in this dimension. This finding reveals a critical nuance: while stakeholders strongly endorse inclusive education principles and recognize its importance for equity and anti-discrimination, they simultaneously acknowledge limitations in their comprehensive technical understanding of the concept. This self-awareness suggests that despite philosophical alignment with inclusive education values, stakeholders recognize the need for deeper knowledge about implementation mechanisms, pedagogical approaches, and support systems required for effective inclusion.

### **Implementation Support Dimension**

The Implementation Support dimension revealed more complex patterns ( $M=3.846$ ,  $SD=0.721$ ), with substantial variation reflecting different aspects of practical implementation. "I support government policies that promote inclusive education" achieved the highest score ( $M=4.231$ ,  $SD=0.639$ ), with 84.6% agreement rates, suggesting strong policy-level support.

However, "Children with special needs should learn together with other children in regular classes" showed more modest support ( $M=3.615$ ,  $SD=0.983$ ), with only 42.3% expressing clear agreement and 34.6% remaining neutral or disagreeing. This pattern reveals significant stakeholder concerns about direct inclusion in regular classroom settings, suggesting preference for flexible service delivery models rather than full inclusion approaches.

The Implementation Support dimension revealed more nuanced and complex patterns compared to conceptual understanding ( $M=3.846$ ,  $SD=0.721$ ), with substantial variation across items reflecting stakeholders' differentiated views on various aspects of practical implementation. This dimension's moderate overall score, positioned between the high conceptual understanding and lower institutional readiness scores, suggests that while stakeholders intellectually support inclusive education principles, they maintain reservations about specific implementation approaches. The considerable standard deviation indicates heterogeneous perspectives within the stakeholder community, potentially reflecting varied experiences, roles, and exposure to inclusive education practices.

Policy-level support emerged as a notable strength within this dimension, with the item "I support government policies that promote inclusive education" achieving the highest score ( $M=4.231$ ,  $SD=0.639$ ) and garnering 84.6% agreement rates. This strong endorsement of governmental inclusive education policies aligns with the high conceptual understanding scores, indicating that stakeholders recognize and support the legislative and regulatory frameworks established through Indonesia's ratification of international conventions and national disability laws. The relatively low standard deviation for this item suggests consensus across different stakeholder groups, providing a solid foundation for policy implementation efforts in Palopo City.

However, support for direct classroom inclusion revealed significant ambivalence among stakeholders. The item "Children with special needs should learn together with other children in regular classes" demonstrated markedly lower support ( $M=3.615$ ,  $SD=0.983$ ), with only 42.3% expressing clear agreement while 34.6% remained neutral or disagreed. This substantial gap between policy support and classroom inclusion endorsement reveals critical implementation concerns, suggesting that stakeholders may prefer flexible service delivery models incorporating resource rooms, pull-out programs, or partial inclusion rather than full inclusion approaches. The high standard deviation (0.983) indicates polarized views on this issue, potentially reflecting tensions between ideological commitment to inclusion and practical concerns about classroom management, resource availability, and educational quality for all students. This finding has significant implications for implementation strategy, suggesting that gradual, flexible approaches may gain broader stakeholder acceptance than immediate full inclusion mandates.

### ***Institutional Readiness Dimension***

The Institutional Readiness dimension emerged as the most critical challenge area in this study, recording the lowest mean scores among all four dimensions ( $M=3.476$ ,  $SD=0.747$ ). This finding represents a pivotal concern for inclusive education implementation in Palopo City, as it reveals a substantial gap between stakeholders' theoretical support and their assessment of practical implementation capacity. The dimension's position significantly below the neutral midpoint suggests that stakeholders perceive current institutional infrastructure and human resources as inadequate for effective inclusive education delivery. This perception aligns with the broader challenges facing regional Indonesian cities, where resource constraints and limited access to specialized support services create structural barriers to implementation despite strong policy commitments.

Infrastructure adequacy emerged as the most pressing concern within this dimension, with the item "I feel that school facilities in my environment support inclusive education" receiving the lowest score across the entire instrument ( $M=3.000$ ,  $SD=0.832$ ). Only 26.9% of stakeholders expressed agreement with this statement, while 34.6% actively disagreed, indicating widespread recognition of facility inadequacy. This finding reflects the reality of Palopo City's educational infrastructure, where most schools lack essential accessibility features such as ramps, modified bathrooms, sensory rooms, and specialized learning materials. The exactly neutral mean score (3.000)



suggests that even supportive stakeholders cannot overlook the tangible infrastructure deficits, recognizing that physical environment modifications represent fundamental prerequisites for meaningful inclusion that remain largely unaddressed in the current educational landscape.

Human resource preparedness, particularly teacher competency, constituted another major area of concern within institutional readiness. The item "I believe that teachers in schools are competent enough to teach children with special needs" demonstrated troubling patterns ( $M=3.346$ ,  $SD=0.829$ ), with only 38.5% of stakeholders expressing confidence in current teacher capabilities. This perception aligns with the reported reality that only 42.3% of participants had received any inclusive education training, suggesting systemic gaps in professional development infrastructure. Furthermore, stakeholders' assessment of actual implementation progress proved equally concerning, with "I feel that schools in my environment have implemented inclusive education" receiving low scores ( $M=3.154$ ,  $SD=0.863$ ). This perception of limited implementation progress, despite Palopo City designating 12 schools as inclusive institutions since 2015, suggests that official designation has not translated into meaningful practice changes. The consistently low scores across all institutional readiness items indicate that stakeholders recognize the substantial distance between current capacity and the requirements for effective inclusive education, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive institutional strengthening interventions targeting both infrastructure development and human resource capacity building.

### **Benefits Perception Dimension**

The Benefits Perception dimension demonstrated consistently high scores across all measured items ( $M=4.067$ ,  $SD=0.698$ ), positioning it as the second-strongest dimension after Conceptual Understanding. This robust recognition of inclusive education's positive outcomes represents a crucial asset for implementation efforts in Palopo City, as stakeholder awareness of benefits can motivate sustained support despite implementation challenges. The relatively low standard deviation indicates consensus across different stakeholder groups regarding inclusion's positive impacts, suggesting that benefits awareness transcends professional roles and personal experiences. This shared understanding of positive outcomes provides important common ground for building implementation coalitions and maintaining momentum through the inevitable challenges of systemic educational reform.

Stakeholders demonstrated particularly strong recognition of inclusive education's benefits for children with special needs, with the item "Inclusive education helps children with special needs develop better" achieving one of the highest scores in the entire instrument ( $M=4.269$ ,  $SD=0.762$ ). The overwhelming 84.6% agreement rate indicates widespread understanding that inclusive settings provide superior developmental opportunities compared to segregated educational models. This perception aligns with extensive international research demonstrating improved academic, social, and emotional outcomes for students with disabilities in inclusive environments. The strong endorsement suggests that Palopo City stakeholders recognize inclusion's potential to enhance learning opportunities, peer interaction, social skill development, and self-esteem for children with special needs, moving beyond mere physical placement to acknowledge the comprehensive developmental advantages of inclusive education.

Particularly noteworthy was stakeholders' sophisticated understanding of inclusive education's universal benefits, extending beyond targeted populations to encompass all students. The item "Inclusive education benefits all students, including those without special needs" received strong support ( $M=4.154$ ,  $SD=0.784$ ), with 80.8% agreement rates demonstrating recognition that inclusion creates positive learning environments for all children. This understanding reflects awareness of research showing that typically developing students in inclusive settings demonstrate enhanced empathy, improved social skills, stronger problem-solving abilities, and better preparation for diverse adult communities. The recognition of bidirectional benefits challenges traditional assumptions about inclusion as a one-way accommodation, instead positioning it as educational enhancement benefiting the entire

school community. This sophisticated benefits perception, combined with high conceptual understanding, suggests that resistance to implementation stems not from doubts about inclusion's value but from practical concerns about execution capacity, reinforcing the critical importance of addressing institutional readiness gaps to translate positive perceptions into successful implementation.

### **Comparative Analysis and Critical Findings**

The comparative analysis across dimensions revealed statistically significant and practically meaningful differences in stakeholder perceptions, with repeated measures ANOVA indicating substantial variation between dimensions,  $F(3,75) = 12.847$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.340$ . The large effect size ( $\eta^2 = 0.340$ ) suggests that these dimensional differences represent substantive rather than trivial variations in stakeholder perceptions, warranting careful attention in implementation planning. Post-hoc analyses revealed the study's most critical finding: Conceptual Understanding ( $M=4.115$ ) significantly exceeded Institutional Readiness ( $M=3.476$ ) with a mean difference of 0.639 ( $p < 0.001$ ), representing a gap of approximately 15.5% on the measurement scale. This substantial discrepancy between theoretical support and perceived practical capacity emerges as the primary implementation challenge facing Palopo City's inclusive education efforts, suggesting that the fundamental barrier to successful inclusion is not ideological resistance but rather the translation of positive attitudes into operational capability.

The identified perception gap aligns powerfully with Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that behavioral intentions depend not only on attitudes and subjective norms but critically on perceived behavioral control. In the Palopo City context, stakeholders demonstrate positive attitudes toward inclusive education (high Conceptual Understanding and Benefits Perception scores) and supportive community norms (strong Implementation Support at the policy level), yet low perceived institutional capacity may fundamentally constrain their behavioral intentions to actively support implementation. This theoretical framework helps explain why inclusive education implementation remains limited despite strong philosophical support and policy endorsement. The perception of inadequate resources, insufficient teacher preparation, and poor infrastructure creates a sense of low behavioral control, potentially leading stakeholders to avoid active engagement with inclusive practices even when they intellectually support the concept, creating a self-perpetuating cycle where low perceived capacity inhibits the very actions needed to build that capacity.

The dimensional analysis reveals a crucial insight with significant implications for intervention design: implementation challenges in Palopo City do not stem from philosophical resistance or limited awareness of inclusive education's benefits. With both Conceptual Understanding ( $M=4.115$ ) and Benefits Perception ( $M=4.067$ ) scoring well above the scale midpoint, stakeholders clearly recognize inclusion's value and positive outcomes while maintaining realistic concerns about current implementation capacity. This pattern fundamentally reframes the implementation challenge from an attitudinal problem requiring awareness campaigns to a capacity problem requiring concrete resource investments and systematic capability development. The findings suggest that additional awareness-raising efforts may yield diminishing returns, as stakeholders already possess strong conceptual foundations and benefits recognition. Instead, intervention approaches should prioritize tangible capacity-building initiatives addressing the specific institutional readiness gaps identified in this study: infrastructure development, teacher professional development, and systematic implementation support mechanisms. This evidence-based reorientation from attitude change to capacity building represents a critical strategic shift for advancing inclusive education implementation in Palopo City and similar regional contexts throughout Indonesia.

### **Regional Context and Implementation Implications**

Palopo City's status as a regional educational hub creates unique implementation dynamics that influence stakeholder perceptions. As a center for educational services serving the broader Luwu region, Palopo faces pressures to demonstrate educational innovation while managing resource constraints typical of regional Indonesian

cities. The diverse ethnic composition and geographic isolation from major urban centers may limit access to specialized resources and professional development opportunities, contributing to institutional readiness concerns.

The study's findings suggest several critical implications for inclusive education implementation strategy. First, the high conceptual support provides a strong foundation for implementation efforts, indicating that awareness-raising activities have achieved substantial success. Second, the institutional readiness concerns identify specific intervention targets requiring immediate attention, particularly teacher competency development and facility enhancement. Third, the benefits recognition strength suggests that implementation communication should emphasize capacity building rather than benefit promotion.

The implementation support patterns suggest that flexible service delivery models may gain broader acceptance than rigid full inclusion approaches. This finding aligns with international research indicating stakeholder preferences for continuum of services models that provide inclusion opportunities while maintaining specialized support options.

### **Comparative Analysis with Previous Research**

This study's findings demonstrate both convergent and divergent patterns when compared with previous Indonesian inclusive education research, revealing important insights about implementation dynamics across different contexts. The high conceptual understanding scores ( $M=4.115$ ) align closely with findings from urban Indonesian studies, such as Handayani and Rahadian's (2013) Jakarta study and Sunardi et al.'s (2017) multi-city research, suggesting that national awareness-raising campaigns and policy communication efforts have achieved relatively uniform penetration across geographic contexts. Similarly, the strong policy-level support (84.6% agreement) mirrors Alimin's (2014) findings regarding stakeholder endorsement of inclusive education principles across Indonesian provinces. However, this study reveals more pronounced institutional readiness concerns ( $M=3.476$ ) compared to urban studies, with facility adequacy scores ( $M=3.000$ ) substantially lower than those reported in Java's major cities. This disparity likely reflects the structural resource inequalities between Indonesia's urban centers and regional cities, where limited access to specialized resources, professional development opportunities, and technical support creates more severe implementation constraints than those experienced in metropolitan areas.

The benefits perception patterns identified in this study ( $M=4.067$ ) demonstrate remarkable alignment with international research conducted in similar developing country contexts, suggesting that stakeholder understanding of inclusion's positive outcomes may represent a universal phenomenon transcending specific national or cultural boundaries. The recognition of benefits for both children with special needs (84.6% agreement) and typically developing students (80.8% agreement) closely parallels findings from Kalambouka et al.'s (2007) meta-analysis and Ruijs and Peetsma's (2009) systematic review, which documented consistent stakeholder acknowledgment of inclusion's bidirectional benefits across diverse international contexts. This convergence is particularly notable given Palopo City's unique cultural context as a regional Indonesian city with diverse ethnic composition, suggesting that the fundamental understanding of inclusion's value operates independently of specific cultural frameworks. The alignment extends to specific benefit categories, with stakeholders recognizing academic, social, and developmental advantages consistent with Schwab's (2020) findings on attitude formation through inclusive contact experiences.

The pattern of high conceptual support coexisting with low institutional readiness identified in this study resonates strongly with research from other Global South contexts, particularly Sari et al.'s (2019) work in South Sulawesi Province and similar studies from Southeast Asian regional cities. This recurring pattern across diverse regional contexts suggests a common implementation trajectory where policy adoption and awareness building precede capacity development, creating a temporal gap between ideological acceptance and practical readiness. The similarity of challenges across regional contexts – including teacher preparation deficits, infrastructure limitations, and resource constraints – indicates potential for productive cross-context learning and strategy sharing. Successful



interventions developed in similar resource-constrained environments, such as the cascading professional development models used in rural Thailand or the community-based support systems developed in Philippine provinces, may offer transferable solutions for Palopo City. This international convergence in both challenges and opportunities suggests that regional inclusive education implementation represents a distinct category requiring specialized approaches different from those developed for urban contexts, emphasizing the importance of developing and sharing context-appropriate strategies among similar regional settings globally.

## Conclusion

This study provides comprehensive empirical evidence regarding stakeholder perceptions toward inclusive education implementation in Palopo City, revealing a complex pattern of strong conceptual support coexisting with significant institutional readiness concerns. The substantial gap between Conceptual Understanding ( $M=4.115$ ) and Institutional Readiness ( $M=3.476$ ) represents the primary implementation challenge, providing evidence for the importance of aligning attitudinal support with practical capacity.

The findings contribute important insights to inclusive education implementation research in Indonesian regional contexts. The multi-dimensional analysis demonstrates that global assessments of support inadequately capture perception complexity, requiring sophisticated approaches that address specific dimensional concerns. Strong benefits recognition challenges assumptions that implementation resistance stems from limited understanding, suggesting capacity-building interventions may prove more effective than awareness-raising approaches.

Evidence-based recommendations include prioritizing institutional capacity development, particularly teacher competency enhancement and facility improvement. Professional development programs should emphasize specific skill development with ongoing support mechanisms. Implementation approaches should emphasize flexible service delivery models acknowledging stakeholder preferences while maintaining inclusion principles. Future research should employ longitudinal designs tracking perception changes and intervention effectiveness studies evaluating capacity-building approaches.

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