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Empirical study on primary school teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Jakarta, Indonesia

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Abstract

Empirical research revealed that teachers' attitudes play a crucial role in successful implementation of inclusive education. This study aimed to examine primary school teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Jakarta, Indonesia. Respondents completed the attitude scale which comprised the theory-driven cognitive, affective and behavioral components of attitude. The findings show that teachers are in favor of inclusion and their attitudes seem to be related to their teaching experiences and training in special education. In addition, the development of attitude scale for this study fails to confirm the differentiation of three components of attitude

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Keywords: Inclusive education; Teachers' attitude; Primary school; Indonesia

1. Introduction

Norwich (1994) and Parasuram (2006) argued that teachers' acceptance of the inclusive policy is likely to affect their commitment to implement the policy. Previous research revealed that teachers' positive attitudes increase their willingness to accommodate students' diverse needs while negative attitudes could inhibit social participation and academic achievement of students with special needs in the classroom (Beattie, Anderson, & Antonak, 1997; Subban & Sharma, 2005). Based on their meta-analysis of American attitude studies, Scrugg and Mastropieri (1996) reported, however, that even though teachers

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have generally held positive attitude towards the concept of inclusive education, they were less optimistic about the degree to which they were adequately prepared to successfully implement inclusive education. These could be associated with teachers lack of teaching experience, limited knowledge, and large class size (e.g., Dowing, Eichinger & Williams, 1997).

Another review of literature was carried out by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) on teachers' attitude studies in different countries from 1984 to 2000. The result showed the consistent influence of the nature of the students' disabilities on teachers' attitude both across countries and across time of studies. Teachers' attitudes were less positive towards the integration of students with emotional and behavioral problems, and attitudes became less positive as the severity of the disability increased. They were more willing to accommodate students with mild disabilities or physical/sensory impairments.

In the context of inclusive education, an attitude is defined as a learned and stable disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event in a consistent way (Corsini & Auerbach, 1998). The tripartite model of attitude by Eagly and Chaiken (1993) assumes that each component of attitude, namely cognition, affect, and behavior, is defined independently, and it reflects a different theoretical background. One recent literature review on teachers' attitude using this model of attitude concluded that none of the selected studies focused on all three components of attitudes (De Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011). It was found that the majority of these studies only focused on the cognitive or affective component of attitudes. Therefore, De Boer *et al* (2011) urged the importance of research focusing on all three components of attitudes.

Under the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, people with special needs are viewed as an integral part of society and they enjoy the same rights and obligations as other Indonesians. Given the importance of teachers' attitude towards inclusive education, there is a need to gain more information on teachers' attitude within the context of implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia. There is also no empirical evidence yet on what teachers' demographic characteristics are related to teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion. Therefore, taken collectively, this study was setup with two objectives; firstly, to identify the attitude of primary school teachers towards inclusion, and secondly, to determine the relationship between teachers' attitudes and their demographic characteristics.

2. Methods

A total of 208 teachers from three special schools, four inclusive schools, and six regular schools participated in this study. These public and private primary schools were purposively sampled across five regions of Jakarta.

Teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire which contained an attitude scale. The scale that comprised the three components of attitude (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993) was adapted based on some previously existing instruments, and recent development and policy of inclusive education in Indonesia. The selected items of all components reflect a general philosophy/concept of inclusion in which a child with special needs should be included in the regular setting physically, socially and educationally. The scale disregarded the categorization of disabilities.

Regarding the construction of the attitude scale, 31 items of the attitude scale were subjected to principal components analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis, $KMO = .830$. Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2 (465) = 2562.931$, $p = .000$, indicated that

correlations between items were sufficiently large for CPA. An analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. The results revealed the presence of seven components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, totally explaining 59.73 per cent of the variance. An inspection of the scree plot indicated a clear break after the second component. Using Cattell's (1966) scree test, it was decided to retain two components for this study. Two factors accounting for 36% of common variance were obtained. The first factor accounting for 23.82% of the variance (eigenvalue = 7.38), and the second factor accounted for 12.19% of the variance (eigenvalue = 3.78).

The analysis further revealed that six cognitive items, together with all the affective items loaded on the second factor, and all the behavioral items loaded on the first factor. The items that cluster on the factor 1 represent the Behavioral component, and the ones that cluster on factor 2 represent the Cognitive-Affective component of attitude. The Cronbach's Alpha reliabilities of the sub-scales were .84 for Cognitive-Affective component, and .89 for Behavioral component of attitude. The item-total correlations of all items ranged from .27 to .79.

3. Results

With regard to the first research question, our analysis indicated that teachers' attitude on the two sub-scale of attitude were above the scale' midpoint. Mean scores differences between the Cognitive-Affective component ($M = 2.82$, $SD = .34$) and the Behavioral component ($M = 3.18$, $SD = .38$) showed that although teachers were less in favor of the inclusion of students with special needs, they indicated strong willingness to include those students in their classroom.

Regarding the second research question, independent t-test or one-way ANOVA analyses were conducted on each of the demographic characteristics with the Attitude score means. This has been done to investigate whether the demographic variables affected the attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of students with special needs. Follow-up tests were conducted using the Tukey's HSD posteriori test of contrast.

Table 1 shows that on the two subscale of attitude, there were significant differences in scores for the following demographic variables: *special education training*, *teaching experiences in special education*, and *having students with SEN at present class*. The results indicated that teachers with special education training scored higher than their counterparts without such training on the Cognitive-Affective ($p = .008$) and Behavioral components ($p = .007$). A similar finding was shown for groups of teachers with and without teaching experiences in special education. It was also found that a group of teachers having had SEN students were more favorable towards the inclusion compared to the other group of teachers without SEN students in the classroom. In addition, although there was a significant difference between a group of teachers having students with SEN students at previous class and the other group of teachers, the difference was only found on the Cognitive-Affective component ($p = .000$).

Regarding the variable '*type of school*' (*public versus private schools*), it was found that private school teachers were more favorable than public school teachers to the inclusion on the Behavioral component ($p = .007$). Additionally, one-way ANOVA was performed to examine differences in the attitude scores held by the groups of teachers coming from three types of school, i.e., inclusive school, regular school and special school. The analysis yielded a statistically significant effect of group on the Cognitive-Affective component ($p = .000$), and on the Behavioral component ($p = .002$). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test showed that the regular school teachers and the special school teachers differed

significantly on the Cognitive-Affective scores. Similar results between the regular group and the special group was found on Behavioral scores.

Table 1. Mean scores and standard deviation of respondents' characteristics

Characteristics	Cognitive-Affective		Behavior	
	M(SD)	F/t value	M(SD)	F/t value
<i>Special education training</i>				
Yes	2.99 (.31)		3.27 (.31)	
No	2.80 (.34)	4.09**	3.13 (.42)	2.73 **
<i>Teaching experiences in special education</i>				
No	2.73 (.35)		3.09 (.45)	
Yes	2.97 (.31)	-5.20**	3.24 (.33)	-2.61**
<i>Type of school (1)</i>				
Public	2.86 (.33)		3.12 (.39)	
Private	2.90 (.35)	-.69	3.27 (.37)	-2.73**
<i>Type of school (2)</i>				
Inclusive	2.90 (.34)		3.22 (.36)	
Regular	2.76 (.34)		3.09 (.44)	
Special	3.02 (.29)	12.92**	3.30 (.28)	6.31**
<i>Having student with SEN at present class</i>				
Yes	2.97 (.32)		3.26 (.33)	
No	2.76 (.34)	4.27**	3.09 (.45)	3.08**
<i>Having student with SEN at previous class</i>				
Yes	2.97 (.32)		3.24 (.33)	
No	2.77 (.33)	4.31**	3.11 (.45)	2.34*

Note: * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$

4. Discussion

This study attempted to investigate teachers' attitude towards inclusion of children with special needs. Results suggested that teachers generally held positive attitudes towards inclusion. This is largely surprising as inclusive education has only recently gained momentum in Indonesia, and majority of the participating teachers had lack of knowledge of special education and experience of inclusion. On the contrary, a recent international review reported that the majority of teachers hold neutral or negative attitudes towards inclusive education (De Boer, et al., 2011). With regard to demographic characteristics, the results showed that teachers having experiences of teaching students with special needs, and those working with special needs students were more favorable to the inclusion. This result confirmed several

previous studies (Avramidis, Baylis, & Burden, 2000; Smith & Thomas, 2006; Jerlinder, Danermark, & Gill, 2010). In addition, the influence of training in special education in the formation of positive attitudes towards inclusion was also found, in line with other studies (see Leyser, Kapperman, & Keller, 1994; Lifshitz, Glaubman, & Issawi, 2004; Powers, 2002).

The failure to confirm the distinction of three components of attitude on the scale used in this study could be for two reasons. Firstly, Indonesian teachers might perceive cognitive items as more affective than cognitive, reflecting a synergetic relation between cognition and affect (Eagly, Mladinic, & Otto, 1994). Secondly, the teachers' responses were also consistent with the associative hypothesis that holds that people use their affect as information (see Schwarz, 1990; Trafimow & Sheeran, 1998), and make a decision based on "their evaluation about 'how performing behavior X makes me feel' and 'how good it is to perform behavior X'" (Trafimow & Sheeran, 1998, p. 395). This is relevant to Indonesian teachers who have limited knowledge and experiences on inclusive education, but hold relatively positive attitudes towards inclusion.

As the assessment of respondents' attitude was solely based on their responses to the self-reported instrument, classroom observations need to be conducted to validate these findings, as also suggested by Avramidis *et al* (2000), and De Boer *et al.* (2011). Besides, the substantial in-service teacher training should be developed in order to support the implementation of inclusive education. According to Avramidis and Kayla (2007), training should enable teachers to modify their practice in order to meet individual learning needs of students.

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