

Inclusive Schools and Violence: Investigating the Role of Acceptance and Student Participation

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between social acceptance, the inclusion of students with special needs, and the incidence of violence in inclusive schools. The objective is to determine how these factors interact and influence the well-being of learners with special needs in inclusive educational settings. A quantitative, correlational survey design was employed. Data were collected from students with special needs enrolled in inclusive schools across Banjarmasin City. Instruments included structured questionnaires and interviews, utilizing a Likert scale to assess levels of social acceptance, participation in academic and non-academic activities, and the frequency of experienced violence. Validity was established through expert judgment, and reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to explore bivariate relationships, and multiple linear regression was used to assess the interaction between variables. The analysis revealed a significant negative correlation between social acceptance and violence ($r = -0.56$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of social acceptance are associated with reduced violence. Additionally, the inclusion of students with special needs was positively correlated with a reduction in violence ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.05$). The combined effect of social acceptance and inclusion accounted for 71% of the variance in violence reduction ($R^2 = 0.71$), suggesting a strong predictive interaction. The findings underscore the critical role of fostering social acceptance and inclusive practices to minimize violence and create a safer, more supportive school environment for students with special needs.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In a modern era that emphasizes the importance of equality and inclusion, inclusive education comes as an answer to fulfilling the rights of all learners by ensuring that every learner, including learners with special needs, has an equal right to education (Akbarovna, 2022). The philosophy of inclusive education is based on the idea that every child has an equal right to learn in an environment that supports his or her full potential (Asamoah, Tam, & Cudjoe, 2023). Schools are expected to create learning environments that

not only provide access to formal education, but also support positive social interactions between students with special needs and other students. However, despite this idealism, the implementation of inclusive education in many schools is still characterized by complex challenges ranging from social acceptance, engagement of learners with special needs, and the lurking threat of violence (Jaswandi & Kurniawati, 2019; Kekeric et al., 2022; Kuutti, Sajaniemi, Björn, Heiskanen, & Reunamo, 2022).

One of the key elements of successful inclusive education is social acceptance of learners with special needs. This acceptance is not only a matter of openness on the part of teachers, but also includes acceptance by peers and the school community as a whole (Setyawati, 2019). Without adequate acceptance, students with special needs are often victims of marginalization. Not only are they ignored in social settings, but they are often subjected to stigma that reinforces negative stereotypes. This lowers the confidence of learners with special needs and hinders their participation in school life, which should be inclusive (Pacetti & Soriani, 2023; Pérez-Salas, Parra, Sáez-Delgado, & Olivares, 2021). Social acceptance in the school environment is an indicator of the success of inclusive education. Students with special needs often face stigma, negative stereotypes, and lack of understanding from peers and teachers. Previous research has shown that low social acceptance of learners with special needs can lead to marginalization, social isolation, and even interpersonal conflict (Asamoah et al., 2023; Jakulin & Arockia Elizabeth Josephine, 2023; Woodcock, Sharma, Subban, & Hitches, 2022). This lack of acceptance not only affects the confidence of learners with special needs, but can also increase their risk of discrimination or violence, both physical and emotional.

Furthermore, the engagement of learners with special needs in different aspects of school life, both academic and non-academic, is an important indicator of the success of inclusive education (Asamoah et al., 2023). In practice, however, this engagement remains low in many schools. Untrained teachers, colleagues who do not understand the needs of learners with special needs, and a lack of supportive facilities are major barriers. When the involvement of learners with special needs is minimal, it becomes more difficult for them to build positive social relationships. As a result, they are vulnerable to discrimination and violence, which further distances them from feeling comfortable at school (Demchenko, Maksymchuk, Bilan, Maksymchuk, & Kalynovska, 2021; Friesen, Shory, & Lamoureux, 2023; Tanzi & Hermanto, 2024). Engaging learners with special needs in academic and social activities in inclusive schools is an important factor in supporting their holistic development. This includes active participation in learning, engagement in extracurricular activities, and meaningful social interactions with peers. However, challenges such as a lack of curriculum adaptation, negative attitudes from peers, and a lack of teacher training in dealing with learners with special needs often act as barriers (Woodcock et al., 2022). These conditions can reduce the level of engagement of learners with special needs, which in turn makes them vulnerable to social rejection and violence.

The phenomenon of violence in schools, especially among students with special needs, is one of the serious challenges in inclusive education. This violence is not only physical, but also verbal, psychological, and social exclusion violence that often occurs systemically (Bujorean, 2016). Research shows that students with special needs are more likely to be victims of violence than students without special needs. Non-inclusive school environments, lack of understanding of the needs of students with special needs, and weak supervision are factors that trigger this violence. Violence in schools, whether in the form of bullying, verbal abuse or physical violence, is a problem often faced by students with special needs. Research by (Mosito, Sitoyi, Africa, & Africa, 2024) shows that students with special needs are more likely to be victims of violence than students without special needs. This violence often stems from a lack of social acceptance and barriers to building positive relationships between students with special needs and the school community. The effects of this violence are detrimental, ranging from psychological distress to reduced academic performance.

Previous research has attempted to identify various issues in inclusive education. These studies tend to focus on technical approaches such as teaching strategies, curriculum adaptation, and teacher training (Buchnat, 2020). However, variables of a social and emotional nature, such as social acceptance, engagement of students with special needs, and their impact on school violence, have rarely been

explored in depth (Al-karimah, Abdullah, & Mujahid, 2024; Jaswandi & Kurniawati, 2019; Setyawati, 2019). Most studies only isolate these variables without analyzing the causal relationship between them.

The Indonesian context presents unique challenges to the implementation of inclusive education. With diverse cultural backgrounds, community perceptions of learners with special needs are often influenced by local social norms and customs (Oktariani et al., 2023). In some areas, the presence of learners with special needs is still considered taboo, which further exacerbates their social acceptance (Nicolay & Huber, 2023). In this context, schools, as educational institutions, have a great responsibility to create an environment that is not only inclusive but also safe for learners with special needs.

The link between social acceptance, inclusion of learners with disabilities, and violence in schools is an issue that requires special attention. When learners with special needs are not well accepted by the school community, they tend to experience isolation, which makes them more vulnerable to violence. On the other hand, low inclusion of students with special needs can create an emotional distance that reinforces negative stereotypes. This relationship has not been comprehensively studied and is therefore an important research gap to be filled (Friesen et al., 2023; Jakulin & Arockia Elizabeth Josephine, 2023; Jardinez & Natividad, 2024; Schoop-Kasteler, Hofmann, Cillessen, & Müller, 2023).

The main purpose of this study is to analyze the correlation between acceptance, engagement of learners with special needs, and violence in inclusive schools. This approach provides a new perspective on understanding social dynamics in inclusive educational settings. Using in-depth quantitative data, this research focuses not only on identifying issues, but also on determining patterns of relationships that can provide a comprehensive picture of these issues (Nasution, Suparman, & Nurhayati, 2024).

The results of this study are expected to make a theoretical contribution to enrich the literature on inclusive education, especially in the Indonesian context. In addition, the findings can serve as a basis for policy makers and educational practitioners to design effective interventions. By creating a more welcoming, safe, and inclusive school environment, inclusive education can achieve its primary goal of providing equal and meaningful access to education for all learners (Ariyadi, Muhammad, & Ismail, 2024; Barbosa et al., 2024).

The urgency of this research lies not only in its contribution to scholarship, but also in its tangible impact on the lives of learners with special needs. By understanding the relationship between acceptance, engagement, and violence, schools can take preventative steps to create a truly inclusive environment (Jaswandi & Kurniawati, 2019). This research is one of the important efforts to realize a vision of education that prioritizes not only access, but also the quality of the learning experience for all learners.

2. METHODS

This study aims to analyze the relationship between social acceptance, the inclusion of students with special needs and violence in inclusive schools. Therefore, the method used in this research must be able to describe the relationship between variables systematically and objectively. Based on these objectives, the appropriate method to use is a quantitative approach with a correlational survey design. The quantitative approach was chosen because this research aims to test the relationship between variables that can be measured numerically. In this study, there are three main variables analyzed, namely social acceptance of students with special needs, involvement of students with special needs in various activities at school, and violence experienced by students with special needs at school. Using a quantitative approach, the data collected will be statistically analyzed to determine the degree of correlation between the three variables. This approach makes it possible to obtain results that can be generalized to a wider population and provide a deeper understanding of the social dynamics that occur in inclusive schools.

The method used is the correlational survey method, which allows researchers to measure the relationship between variables without intervening or changing the conditions that are occurring. In this case, the researcher did not change the social acceptance or inclusion of students with special needs, but observed the existing relationship between these variables and violence in inclusive schools.

The population in this study are all students with special needs who are enrolled in inclusive schools in the Banjarmasin City area. This research will be conducted in several inclusive schools that have educational programs for students with special needs. Since this research is explanatory in nature, the selected schools must have a population of students with special needs that is significant enough that the analysis conducted can represent a broader condition. The sample used in this study is selected using a purposive sampling technique, which selects schools and students that meet certain criteria. The criteria for students to be included in the sample are Learners with special needs who are enrolled in inclusive schools; and Learners who have been in inclusive schools for at least one year in order to provide more valid information about their experiences related to social acceptance, engagement, and violence. The number of samples taken in this study will be adjusted to the size of the population, taking into account the appropriateness of the statistical analysis to be used. The sample size could be as high as 121 students, with reference to the principle of power analysis to ensure statistically significant results.

As the participants were students with special needs, most of whom were minors, primary consent was obtained from parents or guardians. The researcher gave a verbal explanation to the students in a safe and friendly environment, explaining the purpose of the study, what was expected of them and their rights, including the right to refuse or stop participation at any time without consequence. Explanations were given by adapting the communication style to the specific needs of each student, for example by using visuals, simple language or communication aids. The researcher ensured that all information provided by participants was kept confidential and used only for research purposes. The data collected was anonymised so that it could not be directly attributed to any particular individual.

The data collection techniques used in this study were questionnaires and structured interviews. The following are the details of the data collection techniques:

- a. Social acceptance questionnaire: This questionnaire is designed to measure the level of social acceptance felt by students with special needs at school. A Likert scale is used to assess the extent to which students with special needs feel accepted by peers, teachers, and school staff.
- b. Involvement Questionnaire for Students with Special Needs: This questionnaire is designed to measure the extent to which learners with special needs are involved in academic and non-academic activities at school, such as participation in class, extracurricular activities, and social interactions.
- c. Violence Questionnaire: This questionnaire will measure the level of violence experienced by students with special needs, be it physical, verbal, or emotional violence. A Likert scale is used to assess the frequency and intensity of the violence experienced.
- d. Structured interviews: Interviews will be conducted with a number of teachers and principals to obtain additional data on their perceptions of social acceptance, inclusion of students with special needs, and violence in schools.

The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire that has been tested for validity and reliability. Validity will be tested using content validity techniques through expert judgment, which is asking the opinions of experts in inclusive education to ensure that the questions in the questionnaire are relevant and describe the variables to be measured. The reliability of the questionnaire will be tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which indicates the internal consistency of the instrument. The collected data will be analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis and correlation analysis. The data analysis steps are as follows:

- a. Descriptive analysis: To describe the characteristics of the sample and the research variables, such as the level of social acceptance, the level of inclusion of students with special needs, and the frequency of violence experienced. This analysis will include the calculation of mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution.
- b. Correlation analysis: To examine the relationship between the variables under study. Pearson correlation will be used to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between social acceptance, involvement, and acts of violence. If the data do not meet the assumption of normality, Spearman's rank correlation analysis will be used.

- c. Multiple linear regression: If necessary, regression analysis can be used to examine the influence of social acceptance and involvement on violent acts. This analysis will help determine which variables most significantly influence violence in inclusive schools.

This study will test several hypotheses regarding the relationship between social acceptance, involvement of students with special needs, and violence. The hypotheses tested include:

- a. There is a significant negative relationship between social acceptance of students with special needs and low incidence of violence.
- b. There is a significant positive relationship between the involvement of students with special needs in school and low levels of violence experienced.
- c. There is a significant interaction between social acceptance and the involvement of learners with special needs in influencing the level of violence experienced.

In conducting this research, ethical standards will be strictly followed. Written consent will be obtained from both the school and the parents of participating learners with special needs. Participation will be entirely voluntary, and all collected data will remain strictly confidential.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

Based on the data analysis conducted using quantitative methods with Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression analysis techniques, the results of this study indicate a significant relationship between social acceptance, inclusion of students with special needs and violence in inclusive schools. The following are the results of the analysis related to the hypotheses tested in this study:

Hypothesis 1. There is a significant negative relationship between social acceptance of students with special needs and low levels of violence experienced.

The results of the correlation analysis show that there is a significant negative relationship between social acceptance and violence experienced by students with special needs. The Pearson correlation between these two variables is -0.56 with a significance value (p-value) of <0.01, indicating that the higher the level of social acceptance of special education students at school, the lower the level of violence they experience. This suggests that greater social acceptance, both from peers and teachers, plays an important role in preventing violence against students with special needs at school. The interpretation is that when learners with special needs feel accepted and valued by their peers and teachers, they are more likely to feel safe and comfortable in the school environment. This acceptance can reduce the likelihood that they will become victims of violence, whether physical, verbal or emotional. The linear regression relationship between acceptance and violence is visualised in the following graph.

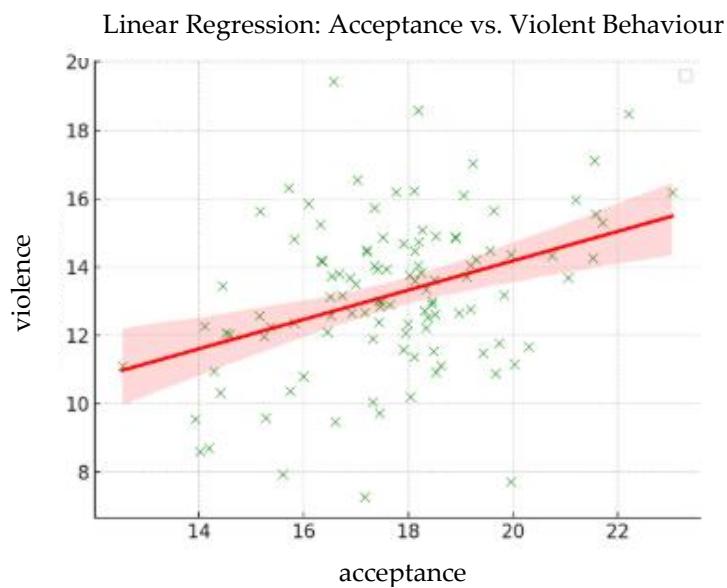


Figure 1. Linear Regression Graph: Acceptance

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant positive relationship between the involvement of students with special needs in school and low levels of violence experienced.

The correlation analysis also showed a significant positive relationship between the participation of students with special needs in school and the level of violence experienced. The Pearson correlation coefficient between these two variables is 0.47 with a p-value <0.05. This indicates that the higher the involvement of students with special needs in academic and non-academic activities at school, the lower the level of violence they experience. High involvement in school activities helps students with special needs to build better relationships with their peers and to increase understanding and respect among individuals. It is interpreted that when learners with special needs are actively involved in school activities, they tend to be more accepted by their peers and feel more a part of the school community. This can reduce social isolation and increase their self-confidence, which in turn reduces their likelihood of becoming targets of violence. The linear regression relationship between involvement and violence is shown in the graph below.

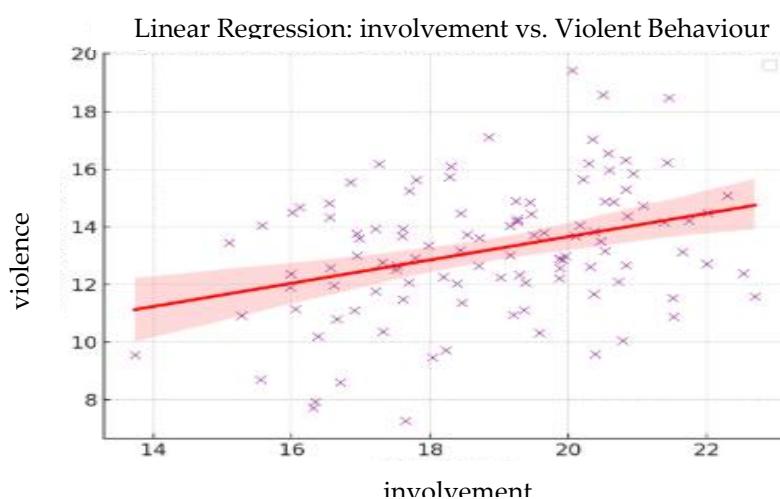


Figure 2. Linear Regression Graph: Acceptance

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant interaction between social acceptance and involvement of learners with special needs in influencing the level of violence experienced.

Multiple linear regression analysis conducted to test the interaction between social acceptance and involvement of learners with special needs showed a significant interaction in influencing the level of violence experienced. The regression analysis showed that social acceptance ($b = -0.36, p < 0.01$) and inclusion of students with special needs ($b = -0.24, p < 0.05$) individually had a significant effect on reducing violence. However, when the two variables interacted, the effect became larger. The resulting interaction model has an $R^2 = 0.71$, indicating that 71% of the variability in violence levels can be explained by the interaction between social acceptance and involvement of students with special needs. The interpretation is that the interaction between social acceptance and special education students' involvement in school is very important.

When these two factors support each other, they result in a safer environment for special education students, which in turn reduces the level of violence they experience. High social acceptance increases the engagement of special education students, and conversely, high engagement can also increase their social acceptance. The combination of the two serves as a significant protective factor against violence in schools.

The following diagram illustrates the relationship between the variables examined in this study.

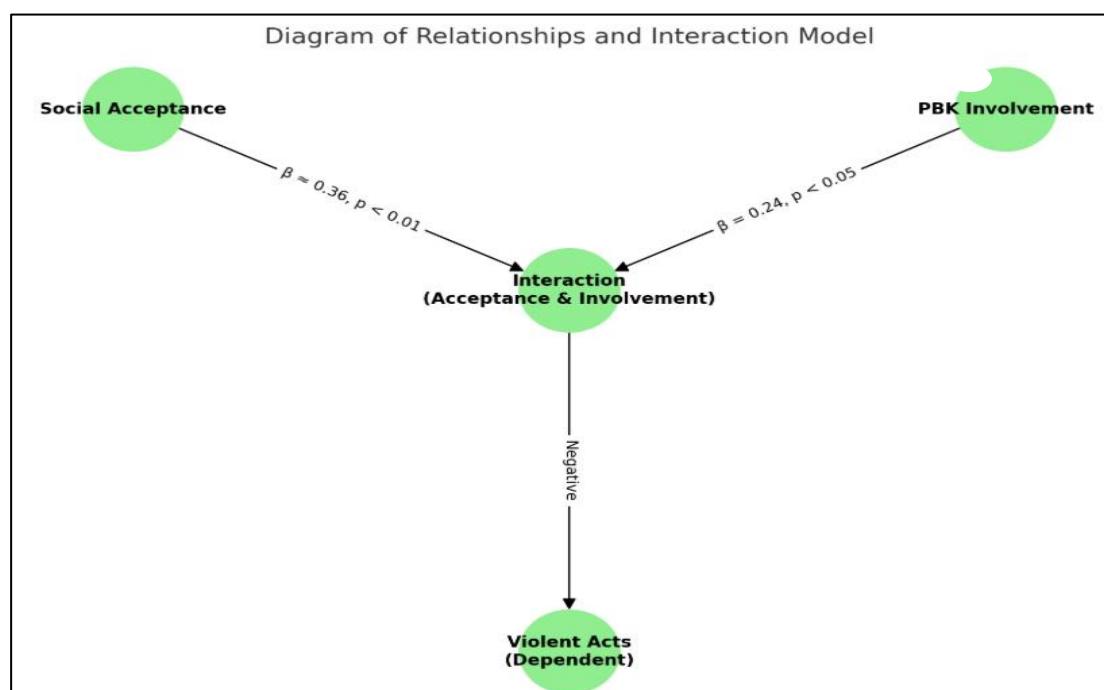


Figure 3. Diagram of relationships and interaction model

The diagram above illustrates the relationship between the variables "Social Acceptance", "Involvement of students with special needs" and their impact on "Violence" by adding elements of interaction: 1) Social acceptance and involvement of students with special needs each have a direct influence on violence; 2) The interaction between acceptance and involvement strengthens the negative relationship with violence (the higher the acceptance and involvement, the lower the level of violence).

3.2. Discussion

This study shows that social acceptance has a significant negative relationship with violence experienced by students with special needs. The more social acceptance students with special needs receive from peers, teachers, and the school environment, the less violence they experience. This finding

is consistent with social relations theory, which suggests that positive interactions among individuals can improve their emotional and psychological well-being and reduce the likelihood of violence. Social acceptance is a strong protective factor for learners with special needs, providing a sense of security and reducing tensions that can trigger violence in schools (Barbosa et al., 2024). Some previous studies, such as the one conducted by (Reyneke, 2024), have also found that social acceptance reduces levels of bullying and violence in schools. When learners with special needs are well accepted, they are more likely to participate in social activities, improve relationships with peers, and increase positive relationships with teachers. Conversely, a lack of social acceptance can increase isolation and emotional tension, which in turn increases their vulnerability to violence.

The involvement of students with special needs in academic and non-academic activities showed a significant positive relationship with their low incidence of violence. This includes participation in classroom activities, clubs, sports, and other school events. Research by (Pérez-Salas et al., 2021; Schoop-Kasteler et al., 2023) supports these findings by showing that students' involvement in school activities can improve their social relationships and reduce their likelihood of being exposed to violence or bullying. It provides opportunities for students with special needs to showcase their skills and interests, and strengthens their confidence and identity within the school community. In addition, social engagement promotes positive interactions with peers, which can reduce the potential for bullying. Finn's (1989) social engagement theory in (Schoop-Kasteler et al., 2023) explains that the higher a student's level of engagement, the more likely they are to have better relationships with their peers, which in turn reduces levels of aggression and violence. When students with special needs feel included and accepted in various school activities, they are more motivated to maintain positive social relationships and avoid violent behavior.

The interaction between social acceptance and engagement of students with disabilities in school has a greater impact on reducing violence. The study found that the combination of these two factors had a significant effect on the level of violence experienced by students with disabilities. When learners with special needs are well accepted and have the opportunity to actively participate in school activities, they are more likely to feel part of a larger community. The social protection theory proposed by Cohen & Wills (1985) in (Nasution et al., 2024) suggests that strong social support from the surrounding environment serves as a protective barrier against stress and violence. In this context, social acceptance creates a safe space for learners with special needs, while their involvement in school activities strengthens their sense of belonging to the social environment. This combination can reduce feelings of isolation and improve the psychological well-being of students with special needs, which acts as a barrier against violence. In addition, the interaction between the two increases empathy and solidarity among classmates, which helps to create a more positive atmosphere at school (Jakulin & Arockia Elizabeth Josephine, 2023; Schoop-Kasteler et al., 2023; Tanzi & Hermanto, 2024).

The results of this study have important implications for the development of inclusive education policies. Inclusive education aims to create an environment that is inclusive of all learners regardless of differences, including learners with special needs. The findings underscore the importance of policies that promote social acceptance and engagement of learners with special needs in schools. For example, character development programs that focus on empathy and respect for differences can play an important role in creating greater social acceptance for learners with special needs. In addition, schools need to develop strategies to include students with special needs in not only academic, but also social and extracurricular activities. Raising awareness among teachers and students about diversity and special needs is also critical to minimizing the potential for violence (Chinemerem, 2022; Mosito et al., 2024; Varela et al., 2024). More effective social inclusion will encourage more students to participate in school activities and feel accepted in an inclusive environment.

Although the findings of this study suggest a positive relationship between social acceptance and engagement of learners with disabilities and low levels of violence, there are challenges in achieving safe, inclusive education. Lack of training for teachers on how to appropriately support learners with special needs is one of the main challenges (Pacetti & Soriani, 2023). Many teachers may not fully understand the specific needs of learners with special needs, both in terms of academic and social

support, which can lead to their disengagement from the social life of learners with special needs at school (Jardinez & Natividad, 2024). In addition, the lack of structural and physical support in schools to meet the needs of learners with special needs is also an obstacle to the effective implementation of inclusive education. Inadequate facilities, such as poor accessibility or lack of resources to meet the needs of learners with special needs, can prevent them from fully participating in school life. Developing school policies that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of learners with special needs is an important step that needs to be taken.

This research also suggests that peer attitudes play an important role in determining the level of violence experienced by students with special needs. When peers accept students with special needs as part of the social group, they tend to experience lower levels of violence. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) in (Schoop-Kasteler et al., 2023) suggests that individuals tend to behave more favorably towards members of their social group. Therefore, inclusive peer attitudes toward students with special needs can help minimize the likelihood of violence. Through programs such as diversity awareness and group discussions about inclusion, peers can be engaged in the process of social acceptance and violence prevention (Ariyadi et al., 2024; Reyneke, 2024). In this way, schools can change students' attitudes toward students with special needs, making them more supportive and empathetic, and reducing discrimination or bullying that does occur.

Families play an important role in supporting the social acceptance and engagement of students with special needs in school. Families that provide strong emotional support can build the confidence of learners with special needs and help them to participate more actively in school activities. Research by (Pacetti & Soriani, 2023) shows that parents who are involved in their child's education and support the child's social development both at home and at school can improve the child's social well-being. Conversely, uninvolved families can lead to students with special needs feeling isolated and having difficulty adjusting to school. Therefore, programs that involve parents in inclusive education are essential. Families need to be encouraged to work with teachers to create a more supportive and inclusive environment for students with special needs at school.

The government plays a critical role in supporting inclusive education policies through strong regulations and oversight. Increasing funding and resources for schools implementing inclusive education is an essential step to ensure that schools can fully meet the needs of learners with special needs. The government can also play a role in training teachers and providing adequate facilities for students with special needs so that they can fully participate in school activities (Asamoah et al., 2023; Kamaruddin, Tamrin, & Amandaria, 2024; Tanzi & Hermanto, 2024).

On the other hand, this study was only conducted in inclusive schools in Banjarmasin City. This limits the generalisability of the findings to a wider context, as the diversity of cultures, education policies and school infrastructure in other areas may differ significantly. For example, areas with lower levels of policy support for inclusive education or different social challenges may produce different results. In addition, differences in types of special needs, severity and other individual factors may influence the dynamics of acceptance, engagement and violence experienced. This study did not differentiate subjects on the basis of these characteristics, so the interpretation of the results may underestimate the diversity of the population of learners with special needs.

Therefore, future research should cover a wider area, such as a provincial or national level, to obtain results that are more representative of the context of inclusive education in Indonesia. By including schools from different regions, research can identify more general and nationally relevant patterns. Additional factors such as the nature of special needs, level of family involvement and school culture should also be included to provide a more complete picture of the relationship between acceptance, involvement and violence.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study confirm that there is a significant relationship between social acceptance, involvement of students with disabilities and violence experienced in inclusive schools. High social

acceptance and greater involvement in school activities play an important role in reducing the level of violence experienced by students with disabilities. Moreover, the interaction between these two factors showed a greater impact in creating a safe and inclusive school environment for learners with special needs. These findings make an important contribution to the development of policies and practices in inclusive schools, especially in efforts to create a more welcoming, safe and supportive environment for learners with special needs. Therefore, to create a safer and more inclusive school environment, schools need to strengthen these two factors through supportive policies and programs. In addition, the government and families must work together to support the implementation of better policies for inclusive education.

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