

CHOOSING INCLUSIVE OR SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY IN INDONESIA: EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT AND ANALYSIS OF RELATED FACTORS

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Abstract

Access to education remains a challenge for children with disability. In Indonesia, families can choose to send children with disability to either inclusive or specialized schools. This study aimed to identify the factors associated with the choice of sending children with disability to inclusive or special schools and factors linked to school dropout. Caregivers of children with disability in Java, Indonesia were interviewed to collect data on enrolment in school, sex and age of the children with disability, type of disability, parents' age and education, and independence of children with disability. The characteristics of children with disability studying in inclusive and special schools were compared. Logistic multivariate linear regression was done to analyze factors related to the choice of school. Data from 281 children with disability were analyzed: 175 (62.3%) of the school-aged children with disability were actively studying at school, with 84.57% studying in inclusive schools and 15.43% in special schools. Children's age, independence in daily activities, and ability to learn and play are factors that affect parents' choice of educational placement for children with disability. Children's age and mothers' age are variables influencing children with disability to drop out.

Keywords: children, disability, dropout, education, school placement

Introduction

All children, including children with disability (children with disability), have the right to education. The Indonesian government has taken measures to provide education for children with disability by encouraging inclusive education projects. The number of children with a disability enrolled in schools has increased dramatically from 15,181 in 2007 to over 400,000 in 2017 (Poernomo, 2016) (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017b). Among these children, about 70% study in inclusive schools and 30% in special schools.



Despite all these developments, access to education remains a challenge for children with disability. In 2018, 20.51% of children with a disability never went to school, 29.35% did not finish primary school, 26.32% completed primary school, 9.97% finished junior high school and 10.47% completed senior high school. While children without disability, 3.05% never went to school, 10.73% did not finish primary school, 24.76% completed primary school, 22.14% finished junior high school and 29.66% completed senior high school (Jayani, 2021). It is evident that children with a disability still face tremendous obstacles to obtaining an education.

The Indonesian government made policies to increase access to education for children with disability. In 2009 the Minister of National Education Regulation No. 70 about Inclusive Education was released. The government set regular schools to become inclusive schools. There were around 59,000 inclusive schools in 2019.

In 2020 there were 2,017 special schools: 552 state schools and 1,465 private schools (Katadata, 2021). Of 514 regencies and districts throughout Indonesia, there were still 62 regencies and districts that did not yet have special schools (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017a).

Factors influencing accessibility to education for children with disability have been reported in several studies. A study in India reported that access to education for children with disability was influenced by several factors including parents' perception of children with disability, disability severity, society's attitude toward disability, school staff and infrastructure, poverty, availability of support systems, and government policies on the education of children with disability (Limaye, 2016). Other studies reported various factors influencing parents' choice for their children with disability schooling were social economic status, school distance from home, government policy (Ball et al., 2013; Jacobs, 2013).

There is still very little known about factors affecting parents' choice to send their children with disability either to inclusive or special schools. Identification of the factors can improve the school enrolment for children with disability. This topic has not been well studied, including in Indonesia.

This study aimed to study the school placement of children with disability and identify factors affecting the decision to send their children to school, choice of school, and dropout rates of children with disability studying in inclusive schools, studying in special schools, and never going to schools in Java Island, Indonesia.

Methods

This study was a cross-sectional observational study using consecutive sampling. Data were collected in three districts: Gunungkidul and Kulonprogo Districts in Yogyakarta Special Province, and Situbondo District in East Java Province. Two villages were chosen in each regency: Bejiharjo Village (Karangmojo District) and Wonosari Village (Wonosari District) in Gunungkidul Regency, Margosari Village (Pengasih District) and Giripeni Village (Wates District) in Kulonprogo Regency, and Kendit Village (Kendit District) and Olean Village (Situbondo District) in Situbondo Regency.

The target population was children with disability and their families in Yogyakarta and East Java, Indonesia. Subjects with an unclear disability or aged 18 years and above were excluded. Data collected included the sex of the children

with disability, type(s) of disability, father's and mother's educational level, enrolment in school, and independence of children with disability.

School enrolment was classified as children that had attended formal school and children who had not. Children who attended school were further classified based on the choice of school (inclusive or special) and whether the child dropped out or not. Independence was assessed using a questionnaire based on the Washington Group Extended Set on Functioning, with additional questions on learning, playing, and self-care (The Washington Group on Disability Statistics, 2008).

Data were obtained through face-to-face interviews with the parents or primary caregivers of children with disability. Interviews were done by trained community health volunteers. They interviewed parents or primary caregivers of children with disability.

Statistical analyses were done for children with disability aged 7-17 years of age who had ever been enrolled in a formal school, in accordance with the compulsory school age in Indonesia. Several children aged 6 years were already studying at primary school, these children were also included in the analysis. Logistic multivariate linear regression was done to analyze factors related to (1) whether children with disability were enrolled in inclusive or special schools and (2) whether children with disability stayed or dropped out of school.

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee for Health Research, Faculty of Medicine, Duta Wacana Christian University.

Findings and discussion

Findings

Characteristics of children with disability

Overall, data were collected from 300 children with disability and their families. However, data from 19 children were excluded because of unclear disability, double data or aged older than 18 years. Overall, data from 281 children with disability were analyzed: 115 from Situbondo Regency, 96 from Gunungkidul Regency, and 70 from Kulonprogo Regency. The characteristics of children with disability and their parents are presented in Table 1.

The average age of the children with disability was 9.76 years, with nearly half (48.4%) of the children aged 7-12 years. Most of the children with a disability had single disabilities, with sixty-three (22.42%) children with disability with multiple disabilities. Of the school-aged children, 62.3% were actively studying at school, with 6.2% being dropouts and 10% never experiencing formal education. Among the children with a disability still studying at school, about four-fifths (84.57%) study in inclusive schools, and the rest (15.43%) in special schools. Difficulty in learning was reported for a majority of the children with disability (85.59%), but less than a third (28.38%) of the families reported any difficulties in ADL.

Factors predicting choice of school placement

Table 2 compares the characteristics of the students in different educational settings and whether they dropped out of school. Children with a disability going to special schools had significantly older ages than children with disability in inclusive schools, with a slight difference of 1.3 years on average. More children

with disability in special schools had difficulties with learning, playing, and ADL. Mothers' education was higher in the group of children with disability studying in inclusive schools. Among the children with disability who dropped out of school, the children with disability and their parents were older than the children with a disability still going to school. The proportion of children with disability with multiple disabilities was higher in the dropout group than in the actively studying group.

Univariate logistic regression was carried out to identify factors that have a potential effect on education placement and dropping out of school. The result was presented in Table 3. Age, single/multiple disabilities, and difficulties in learning, playing, and conducting daily activities were found as significant variables.

Hierarchical multivariate logistic regression was done to identify factors affecting parents' decisions about whether to send their children to inclusive or special schools. The results were presented in Table 4. Younger age and higher independence (less difficulty in playing, and learning, and more independence in doing daily activities) predicted placement in inclusive schools.

Factors predicting school dropout

Multivariate logistic regression for dropout was conducted and the result could be seen in Table 5. The age of children with disability and mothers' age were the only significant predictors of dropout. Those who dropped out of school were significantly older and had mothers who were older than the children who stayed to finish their schooling.

Discussion

Characteristics of children with disability

This research reported data from 281 children with disability. The most common disability found among the children with disability in this study was intellectual, followed by behavior and emotion, vision and mobility. The Indonesian Central Body of Statistics conducted the 2015 Intercensal Population Survey and reported that among the population aged 10 years and over 8.56% of them had a disability: 6.36% had visual impairment, 3.35% had hearing impairment, 3.76% had difficulty in walking or climbing stairs, 1.30% had difficulty in using their fingers, 2.81% had memory disorder, 1.40% had emotional and behavior disorder, 1.52% had communication disorder, and 1.02% had difficulty in doing activities of daily living (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2015). The Ministry of Health reported that 3.3% of the 5-17 years, 22% of the 18-59 years, and 26% of ≥ 60 year population had a disability, but there was no data based on the type of disability (Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2018). The different findings in the proportion of different types of disability of this study from the national data may be caused by the different ages of the population surveyed. Almost one-fourth of the children had multiple disabilities. National Census conducted in 2012 estimated that 29.97% of people with disability in Indonesia had multiple disabilities (Mujaddid, 2014). The 2015 Intercensal Population Survey estimated that multiple disabilities were found in 50% of people with disability. Disability data in Indonesia is still problematic because of the different questions asked to respondents. UNICEF reported that different percentages of disability would be found when different questions were used in the survey (UNICEF, 2013). The

Indonesian government needs to develop a standard questionnaire to collect disability data.

The education data showed that 87.4% of this study's subjects of school age went to school, either too inclusive or special schools. The 2018 National Economic Census reported that 72% of children with disability were enrolled in schools (UNICEF, 2020). The percentage found in this study was higher than the national number. This might be caused by local variation across Indonesia. Inclusive and special schools were concentrated on Java island, so children with disability living in Java had more opportunities to access formal schools (Ediyanto et al., 2017). A report wrote that 83.9% of children with disability in Yogyakarta Special Province, which was located on Java island were enrolled in schools in 2016 (Harian Jogja, 2018). This study took place in Java island and this might explain the higher percentage of children with disability enrolled in schools compared to the national percentage.

Most (84.6%) children with disability who were still actively studying went to inclusive schools. The Ministry of Education reported that in 2017 around 414,000 children with a disability went to school and 72.2% of them were enrolled in inclusive schools (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017b) (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017a). The Indonesian Education Minister Regulation No. 70 the Year 2009 required the municipality and regency government to assign at least one elementary school and one junior high school in every district to be inclusive schools and one senior high school to be inclusive schools (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional No.70 Tahun 2009, 2009). The local government in Java were more prepared to adhere to this regulation and even had more mainstream schools that accepted students with disability ((Harian Jogja, 2018; Kumparan, 2019; Supriyatno, 2019). The fact that there were quite many inclusive schools in Java might explain the higher percentage of this study's children who studied in inclusive schools than that of the national data.

The percentage of children with disability of school age enrolled at formal schools was quite high, yet it was still lower than that of children without disability. The 2018 National Economic Census reported that 99.6% of children without disability studied elementary school, 86% went to junior high school and 69% learned at senior high school (UNICEF, 2020). The data showed that compared to children without disability, those with a disability still did not have equal access to education.

This study found that 85.6% of children with a disability had difficulty in learning, 40.1% in playing, and 28.4% in performing activities of daily living. The difficulty was found in all kinds of disability. This finding was different from a study that reported greater difficulties in performing daily activities was found in children with physical or intellectual disabilities (Chan et al., 2019). This difference might be caused by differences in the instrument used. Chan et al. (2019) used the Barthel Activities of Daily Living index, while this study asked parents to rate the level of their children with disability's ability in conducting daily activities.

Children with a disability going to special schools had significantly older ages than children with disability in inclusive schools, with a slight difference of 1.3 years on average. More children with disability in special schools had difficulties with learning, playing, and ADL. Mothers' education was higher in the group of children with disability studying in inclusive schools. Factors predicting

placement of children with disability in inclusive schools are younger age and higher independence (less difficulty in playing, learning, and ADL).

Among the children with disability who dropped out of school, the children with disability and their parents were older than the children with disability who still went to school. The proportion of children with disability with multiple disabilities was higher in the dropout group than in the actively studying group. The older age of children with disability and older mothers' age were significant predictors of dropout.

Factors predicting choice of school placement

Children's age, independence in daily activities, and ability to learn and play were factors associated with parents' choice of their children's school placement. Children of older age with higher dependence on daily activities and more difficulties in learning and playing were more likely to study in special schools.

Children with disability experience more bullying than children without disability. A recent meta-analysis of global violence against children with disability reported that overall 31.7% of children with disability experience violence and the odds ratio was 2.08 compared to children without disability (Fang; et al., 2022). Children studying in either inclusive or special schools have been bullied. However, those with more evident disability reported more bullying (Swearer et al., 2012). Children with more learning and playing difficulties show more observable disability and are more likely to be targets of bullying.

Including a child(ren) with a disability in an ordinary class is quite a challenge for a teacher to overcome. Teachers have to create a learning environment that appreciates differences (Nilholm & Alm, 2010). Moreover, the class size of inclusive schools is bigger than that of special schools. Some studies in Indonesia reported bullying against children with disability studying in inclusive schools due to various factors including a lack of teachers' understanding of bullying especially (Roziqi, 2018; Sakinah & Marlina, 2018).

The fear of possible bullying in inclusive schools and concern of inclusive school teachers' burden might have influenced parents' decision to send their children with disability with greater difficulty in learning, playing, and doing daily activities to study in special schools.

Children with disability's age was also a significant factor influencing parents' decision for school placement. Those studying in the special schools were older than those in the inclusive schools. Those children likely have more severe disability in learning that the parents decided to wait expecting their children to become abler before sending their children to school. Finally, they decided to send their children to special schools considering the children's age and disability severity.

Factors predicting school dropout

The age of children with disability and mothers' age were predictors of school dropout. Children who dropped out of school were significantly older and had mothers who were older than those who stayed to finish their studies. One of the factors affecting students dropping out in Indonesia was the inability to go to the next level (Yanti et al., 2019). Students who have to repeat the same grade in the following academic year are usually older than the other students in the class.

Another Indonesian study reported older age as one of predicting factors of dropout (Kusbudiyanto & Munandar, 2020). Possibly those students feel ashamed and are more likely to drop out. The factor of mothers' age may be linked to the older age of the children with disability.

Implications

This research showed that special attention is to children with more severe learning, and playing disability, or more dependence on activities of daily living to ensure that children with disability's right to education is fulfilled. Indonesia has social security program for families that have a member(s) with a disability. Beneficiaries of this program receive an allowance quarterly and have to join meetings with a social worker every three months. The government can include a condition that the member with a disability of school age should go to school for the family to be eligible for the disability allowance. Besides making this a condition for receiving an allowance, the social worker should also provide support for the family including finding a school to accept the child, mediating communication with the school, and other support during the schooling to prevent dropout.

Limitations

Data on the children with disability's level of difficulty in learning, playing, and doing daily activities were based on the subjective perception of parents or caregivers of children with disability's perception.

Conclusions

More than half of Indonesian children with disability are actively studying at schools, more than 80% go to inclusive schools, and the rest go to special schools. schooling in is studied. Of the school-aged children, 62.3% were actively studying at school. About 85% have difficulty in learning and 28% have difficulty in doing daily activities independently. Children's age, and difficulties in learning, playing, and conducting daily activities are factors predicting parents' choice to send their children either to inclusive or special schools. The age of children with disability and mothers' age are the significant predictors of dropout.

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