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THE LEVEL OF SOCIAL SUPPORT FROM STUDENTS WITHOUT SPECIAL NEEDS TOWARD STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN SCHOOLS IN RIAU PROVINCE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES

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Abstract

Inclusive education requires a learning environment that not only provides access to education but also fosters positive social interaction among all students, including children with special needs (ABK). However, field observations indicate that social support from non ABK students toward ABK students remains suboptimal, potentially hindering their social and academic adaptation. This study aims to analyze the level of social support provided by non ABK students to ABK students in Riau Province and to formulate its implications for guidance and counseling services. This study employs a quantitative approach using a survey method. The study sample consisted of 121 non ABK students selected through purposive sampling, with criteria including enrollment in an inclusive school and having direct interaction with ABK students. Data collection was conducted through the distribution of an online questionnaire using Google Forms. The instrument was designed based on Sarafino's social support theory, which encompasses five dimensions: emotional, esteem, instrumental, informational, and social group. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results of the study indicate that the overall level of social support from non ABK students toward ABK reached 84.12%, though there were variations across each dimension. Informational support had the lowest average score, at 16.66 or 83.31%, indicating a lack of information provision, guidance, and problem-solving assistance for ABK students. Consequently, there is a need to strengthen guidance and counseling services focused on enhancing empathy, communication, and informative support skills in inclusive schools.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Social Support, Without Children with Special Needs (non ABK), Children with Special Needs (ABK), Guidance and Counseling

1. INTRODUCTION

People with disabilities still face various barriers, such as inadequate access to the environment, services, and assistive technologies, as well as social stigma and discrimination, which hinder their inclusion and acceptance in society. In the context of inclusive education, these conditions indicate that the success of students with special needs is determined not only by access to education but also by the quality of social interactions within the school environment. One key factor is social support from peers.

In Indonesia, data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) show that educational participation among children with special needs remains relatively lower than that of children without special needs. This suggests that the challenges of inclusive education lie not only in access but also in the social interactions that take place within the educational environment.

In this context, social support from students without disabilities is a crucial factor in helping students with disabilities adapt academically and socially. According to Sheldon Cohen and Thomas A. Wills (1985), social support is an important resource that can enhance an individual's psychological well-being and help them cope with social pressures. Various studies indicate that social support makes a significant contribution to individual development, with its influence ranging from 30% to 60% on improvements in self-esteem and social engagement (Malecki & Demaray, 2019). This indicates that even for typical students, social support is a fundamental need; consequently, for students with special needs who face limitations in social and emotional aspects, this need becomes even more complex and urgent.

Conceptually, social support encompasses several key dimensions, namely emotional, instrumental, informational, and appreciative support, as outlined by Edward P. Sarafino (in Jarmitia et al., 2016). In an inclusive school setting, these forms of support play a role in enhancing students with special needs' self-confidence, communication skills, and engagement in learning activities.

However, empirical conditions in the field indicate that the level of empathy and social support from non-students with special needs toward students with special needs remains suboptimal. A study by Nowicki and Sandieson (2020) found that over 40% of regular students have low levels of social interaction with students with special needs. In Indonesia, research by Sari et al. (2022) revealed that only about 35% of students actively provide social support to their peers with special needs in inclusive schools. Furthermore, national data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (2020) indicates that approximately 41% of children have experienced bullying at school, a phenomenon that also poses a risk to vulnerable groups such as students with special needs. This situation underscores the need to further enhance students' empathy and prosocial behavior.

On the other hand, some studies point to a more positive picture. Koster et al. (2019) assert that peer interactions can enhance the social acceptance of students with special needs. Schwab (2020) also found that positive attitudes among typical students correlate with increased social inclusion in the classroom. Meanwhile, Pratiwi's (2021) study in Indonesia indicates that social support influences the self-confidence of students with special needs, and Wulandari et al. (2023) reveal that students' lack of understanding regarding the conditions of students with special needs is one of the primary barriers to the formation of optimal social support.

These findings indicate a gap between the ideal and the actual conditions. Ideally, inclusive education requires a supportive and empathetic social environment; however, in reality, there is still a lack of social interaction, insufficient support, and the presence of negative behaviors such as bullying. Thus, social support from non-students with special needs toward students with special needs remains suboptimal and constitutes a problem that requires serious attention.

From a guidance and counseling perspective, this situation is an urgent matter that requires systematic attention. Guidance and counseling teachers play a strategic role in fostering students' empathy, acceptance, and social skills through services such as individual guidance, group guidance, and group counseling. Simple intervention programs such as role-playing, group discussions, and empathy training can serve as alternatives to enhance students' social support in inclusive schools.

Although various studies have examined social support within the context of inclusive education, most still focus on the general relationship between social support and the adjustment of students with special needs. Research that specifically maps the level of social support for non-students with special needs based on comprehensive dimensions of social support and links it to the implications for guidance and counseling services, particularly in Riau Province, remains limited. However, since the social characteristics of each region differ, contextual empirical data is needed.

In an effort to obtain a more in-depth empirical understanding of the level of social support provided by non-students with special needs to students with special needs, this study will also employ data collection techniques in the form of structured interviews with relevant informants. These structured interviews are conducted to obtain data that is focused, systematic, and aligned with the research indicators, thereby supporting a more comprehensive analysis.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the level of social support provided by non-students with special needs to students with special needs in Riau Province based on comprehensive indicators, as well as to formulate its implications for guidance and counseling services in schools. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of inclusive education studies and serve as a practical foundation for guidance and counseling teachers in designing services capable of sustainably enhancing empathy and social support among students.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative approach using a survey method. According to Masri Singarimbun (1989:3), survey research involves taking a sample from a population and using a questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. The survey research is intended to measure and describe the level of social support from students without special needs (non-ABK) toward students with special needs (ABK) in the form of numerical data analyzed statistically.

The concept of social support in this study refers to the theory proposed by Edward P. Sarafino (in Jarmitia et al., 2016), who divides social support into five dimensions, namely: (1) emotional support, (2) appreciative support, (3) instrumental support, (4) informational support, and (5) support from social groups. These five dimensions were used as indicators in the development of the research instrument.

According to Sugiono (2019), the population is the domain of generalization consisting of objects or subjects with specific quantities and characteristics defined by the researcher for study, from which conclusions are subsequently drawn. The population in this study consists of all non-special needs students attending inclusive schools in Riau Province. The sampling method used in this study is a non-probability sampling technique, which is a sampling method that does not provide equal opportunity or probability for every element or member of the population to be selected as a

sample (Sugiono, 2019). The specific type of non-probability sampling used is accidental sampling. According to Sugiyono (2019), accidental sampling is a technique for determining a sample based on chance, meaning anyone who happens to encounter the researcher and is deemed suitable as a data source can be used as a sample. This technique falls under the category of non-probability sampling, where not all members of the population have an equal chance of being selected.

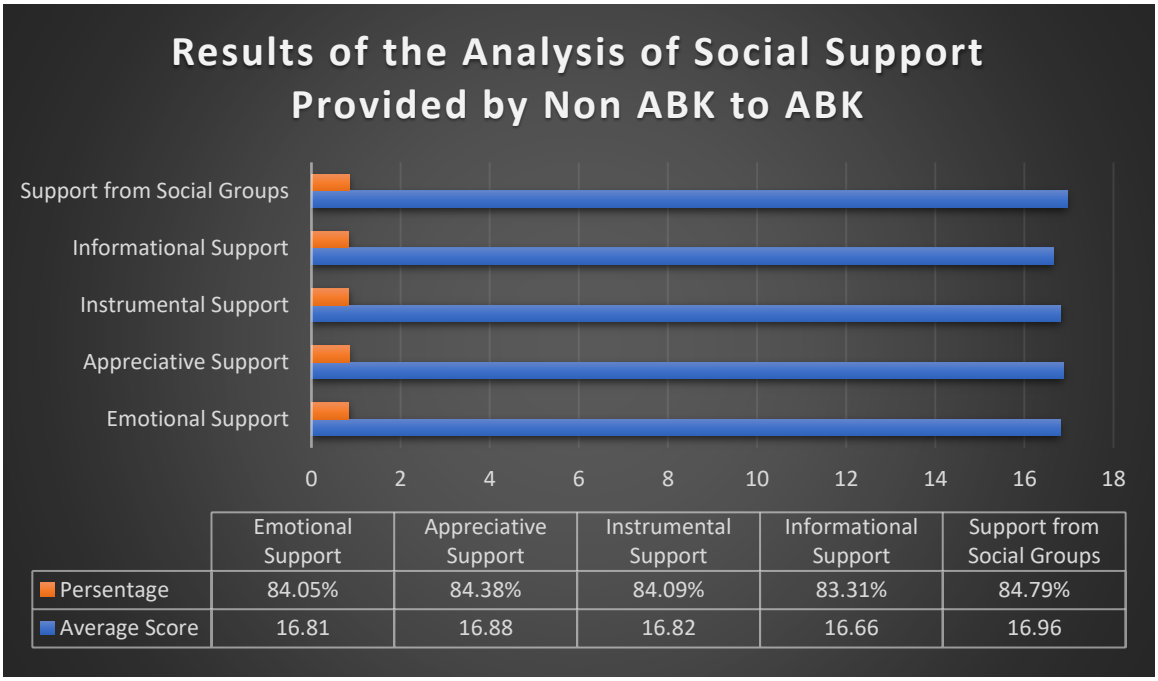
The survey was distributed as an online questionnaire using Google Forms, which was then shared via a WhatsApp group consisting of students at an inclusive school in Riau Province. The procedure was as follows:

a) Create a questionnaire using Google Forms.
b) Distribute the online questionnaire via a WhatsApp group to the teaching community, then forward it to students at inclusive schools in Riau.
c) Collect data over several days, with no limit on the number of respondents.
d) onducting statistical analysis based on the data collected Data collection techniques using a questionnaire.

Based on the social support indicators according to Sarafino's theory. The instrument consists of 25 statements, with each dimension containing 5 items. Responses are measured using a 4-point Likert scale: STS = strongly disagree, ST = disagree, S = agree, and SS = strongly agree. Scores are assigned according to the weighting for positive statements and reversed for negative statements.

3. RESULTS

The analysis results show the following levels of social support:



	Emotional Support	Appreciative Support	Instrumental Support	Informational Support	Support from Social Groups
Persentage	84.05%	84.38%	84.09%	83.31%	84.79%
Average Score	16.81	16.88	16.82	16.66	16.96

Based on the data tabulation results, the level of social support from students without special needs toward students with special needs generally stood at 84.12%. When examined by indicator, social support received the highest percentage, at 84.79%, followed by appreciative support at 84.38%, instrumental support at 84.09%, and emotional support at 84.05%. Meanwhile, informational support received the lowest percentage, at 83.31%. These findings indicate that all social support indicators are at a relatively good and consistent level; however, the informational aspect remains the area most in need of strengthening, particularly regarding the provision of advice, guidance, information, and problem-solving assistance to students with special needs.

The highest score was found in statement number 25 with a score of 428, indicating that the most dominant form of support is acceptance and inclusion within social groups, particularly in discussion activities. Students with special needs are not only accepted but also given the opportunity to participate actively, reflecting an inclusive social environment.

The highest score was found in statement number 7 with a score of 424, indicating that non-students with special needs provide support in the form of positive recognition, particularly in acknowledging the potential and strengths possessed by students with special needs. This form of support is crucial in enhancing the self-confidence and self-esteem of students with special needs.

The highest score was found in statement number 14 with a score of 417, indicating that the most dominant form of instrumental support is tangible assistance with academic activities, such as sharing class notes, which can help students with special needs better understand the learning material.

The highest score was found in statement number 2 with a score of 417, indicating that the most prominent form of emotional support is the attitude of being considerate of the feelings and respecting the circumstances of peers with special needs, without belittling them or making their limitations the subject of jokes. This attitude reflects the presence of empathy and good emotional care in social interactions.

The highest score was found in statement number 19 with a score of 415. This indicates that non-students with special needs provide support through effective communication, specifically by conveying information or explanations using polite language that is sensitive to the feelings of students with special needs.

Based on the overall results of the analysis, it can be seen that all indicators of social support provided by non-students with special needs to students with special needs fall into the relatively good and fairly consistent categories. This indicates that, in general, students have been able to provide various forms of support, including emotional, appreciative, instrumental, informative, and social group support.

However, the informative aspect remains the area most in need of strengthening, particularly regarding statement no. 17. This finding indicates that non-students with special needs still need to improve their ability to provide appropriate and constructive feedback or opinions, especially when students with special needs are facing challenges. This relates to interpersonal communication skills, such as conveying suggestions in an empathetic and non-judgmental manner, as well as being able to offer helpful solutions.

Thus, although social support is generally considered adequate, strengthening the aspect of informational support particularly in providing positive and supportive feedback is an important area to develop within school guidance and counseling services.

4. DISCUSSION

The high level of social support (84.12%) indicates that the social environment in inclusive schools in Riau Province is sufficiently conducive to supporting students with special needs. This suggests that non-special-needs students have a high level of social acceptance toward their peers with special needs.

This finding aligns with Schwab's (2020) research, which states that positive attitudes among regular students are directly linked to increased social inclusion within the classroom. Additionally, the study by Koster et al. (2019) also confirms that peer interaction is a key factor in enhancing the social participation of students with special needs

However, despite falling into the high category, this situation is not yet entirely ideal. This is evident from the disparities among the dimensions of social support, particularly in the informational aspect. Support from social groups received the highest percentage, indicating that students without special needs tend to be able to accept students with special needs as part of their peer group.

Psychologically, belonging to a social group provides a sense of belonging, which is crucial for individual development, especially for students with special needs who are vulnerable to social isolation. This is supported by UNESCO (2020), which states that acceptance within peer groups is a key indicator of the success of inclusive education.

These findings indicate that the school environment has fostered an inclusive culture, in which students with special needs are no longer viewed as "different," but rather as part of the learning community. However, informational support received the lowest score. This suggests that students without special needs still fall short in providing advice, guidance, information, and assistance with problem-solving.

This finding is significant because it shows that although students already possess positive emotional and social attitudes, they have not yet fully developed the cognitive skills needed to assist students with special needs. This aligns with the OECD (2021), which states that social-emotional skills must be supported by effective problem-solving and communication abilities. Additionally, a lack of understanding regarding the conditions of students with special needs (Wulandari et al., 2023) is also a factor contributing to the low level of informative support.

Upon further analysis, the affective aspect (emotional support and recognition) is already in the "good" category, indicating the presence of empathy, concern, and an accepting attitude. The behavioral aspect (instrumental support and social group) also shows strong results, with students having been able to provide support in the form of concrete actions, such as helping with studies and involving students with special needs in group activities.

However, the cognitive aspect, particularly informative support, remains relatively lower. This indicates that students do not yet possess sufficient knowledge and skills to provide assistance in the form of appropriate advice and solutions.

The implication of these findings is that efforts to foster social support in schools should not focus solely on developing attitudes and empathy, but should also be directed toward enhancing students' cognitive and communication skills. Therefore, guidance and counseling services play a strategic role in optimizing students' social support through planned, systematic, and needs-based interventions. In this context, guidance and counseling teachers can implement the following services:

a. Classroom Guidance

Classroom guidance services can focus on providing material regarding an understanding of the characteristics of students with special needs, appropriate interaction methods, and empathetic and inclusive communication. In practice, guidance counselors can use psychoeducational techniques, interactive discussions, and

educational videos on inclusion to help students better understand the material presented. Additionally, these services can be enhanced with empathy training techniques, such as perspective-taking, storytelling, and guided reflection, aimed at helping students understand others' perspectives and feelings more deeply and reducing stigma toward students with special needs. This is crucial because students' lack of understanding is one of the causes of poor-quality social interactions (Wulandari et al., 2023). Furthermore, UNESCO (2020) emphasizes that increasing students' awareness and understanding is the first step in creating an inclusive educational environment. This view is supported by findings from Schonert-Reichl (2017), which indicate that empathy training is effective in enhancing prosocial behavior.

b. Group Guidance

Group guidance can focus on developing students' social skills through topics such as teamwork, effective communication, and acceptance of individual differences. In practice, techniques that can be used include group discussions, collaborative problem-solving, and group dynamics games that encourage active interaction among students. Additionally, role-playing techniques can be integrated into this service, particularly to train students' skills in interacting with peers with special needs, such as how to offer assistance, express opinions, and respond appropriately to specific social situations. Through such simulations, students can learn directly in situations that resemble real-life conditions. Corey (2016) states that group counseling is effective in developing social skills because it involves direct interaction among group members. This is also consistent with the OECD (2021), which states that experience-based learning, such as role-playing, is effective in improving social skills and interaction abilities.

c. Group Counseling

Group counseling focuses on strengthening students' emotional well-being, with content that includes developing empathy, self-acceptance, and acceptance of others, as well as sharing social experiences. Techniques that can be used include sharing sessions, reflection on experiences, and emotional expression. Additionally, role-playing can be utilized in group counseling to help students understand and respond more empathetically to the challenges faced by peers with special needs, particularly in situations requiring advice or support. Through this process, students not only gain emotional understanding but also learn how to provide appropriate responses. Cohen and Wills (1985) emphasize that the emotional support formed through group interactions can enhance an individual's psychological well-being.

Thus, guidance and counseling services serve not only a curative function but also a preventive and developmental one in fostering an inclusive culture at school. Through the implementation of comprehensive and integrated services, it is hoped that the social support provided by students without special needs to students with special needs will not only be substantial in quantity but also deep in quality, particularly in the area of information, which still needs to be strengthened.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aims to determine the level of social support provided by students without special needs toward students with special needs in inclusive schools in Riau Province, as well as its implications for guidance and counseling services.

The results indicate that, overall, the level of social support falls into the high category, meaning that non-students with special needs have been able to accept, value, and interact positively with students with special needs. Thus, the primary objective of this study can be considered achieved: to describe the state of social support within the context of inclusive education.

However, this study also found that not all dimensions developed equally. Social group support emerged as the strongest aspect, while informative support was the weakest. This indicates that although students have demonstrated positive attitudes and behaviors, they have not yet fully developed the ability to provide appropriate assistance in the form of advice, guidance, and solutions.

Therefore, the implications of this study emphasize that guidance and counseling services need to be directed not only toward strengthening affective and social aspects but also toward developing students' cognitive and communication skills. Thus, the results of this study not only address the research questions but also provide a foundation for the development of more effective guidance and counseling services in supporting the success of inclusive education.

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