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Juli Astutik*, Eko Rizqi Purwo Widodo, and Zaenal Abidin

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Research Article

Community-Based Inclusive Education for the Rights and Welfare of Students with Disabilities in Malang City

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Abstract

This study develops a community-based inclusive education model to strengthen the educational rights and social welfare of students with disabilities in Malang City, Indonesia. A qualitative multi-site descriptive design was employed across five special schools. Data were generated through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with five principals and five teachers, document analysis, and a focus group discussion, then analysed using the interactive procedures of data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that community-based inclusion is enacted through five mutually reinforcing components: adaptive use of the national curriculum; curriculum modification and differentiated instruction according to learners' functional profiles; flexible grouping and visual-demonstrative learning strategies; individualized assessment through Individualized Education Programs, progress records, and tailored worksheets; and structured collaboration among schools, parents, community organizations, and local support networks. These components form a rights-based ecosystem that expands access, participation, learning continuity, and social acceptance beyond the classroom. The proposed model positions community participation not as supplementary assistance but as an institutional resource for responsive educational services and student wellbeing. It offers an actionable framework for strengthening inclusive education and locally grounded social-welfare policy, while contributing to SDG 4 and SDG 10.

Keywords: Community Participation; Inclusive Education; Social Welfare; Students with Disabilities.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is increasingly understood as a systemic commitment to remove barriers to presence, participation, learning, and belonging, rather than a narrow placement decision. International reviews show that rigorous inclusion requires policy coherence, institution-wide responsibility, and arrangements that translate rights into everyday learning opportunities [1], [2], [3]. This orientation is especially relevant where students with disabilities encounter exclusion through inaccessible environments, rigid curricula, insufficient support personnel, and low social expectations.

The literature also cautions that formal policy declarations do not automatically produce inclusive practice. Implementation depends on how schools interpret equity, organise support, collaborate with families, and respond to local conditions [4], [5], [6]. Where these elements are weak, learners may be physically enrolled but remain marginal to instruction, peer interaction, assessment, and decisions that affect their lives. Inclusive education therefore has both educational and social-welfare consequences: it shapes access to learning while also influencing safety, participation, confidence, and future opportunities [7], [8].

A pedagogical response must begin from learner variability. Inclusive pedagogy shifts attention away from identifying a small group as a problem and toward expanding participation through flexible teaching, accessible tasks, and high expectations for all learners [9]. Teachers' attitudes, self-efficacy, professional preparation, and beliefs about learning are consequently central implementation conditions [10], [11], [12], [13].

In Indonesia, implementation barriers remain visible across school readiness, teacher capacity, adaptive facilities, coordination with families, and the availability of specialist support [14], [15], [16], [17]. Existing studies have contributed important evidence on curriculum implementation, rights-based participation, and the practical difficulties that schools confront. However, much of this work treats curriculum, teacher work, parental involvement, and community participation as separate dimensions. This leaves limited explanation of how they interact as a local welfare ecosystem supporting students with disabilities.

The present study addresses this gap through a multi-site analysis of five community-founded special schools (Sekolah Luar Biasa/SLB) in Malang City. The schools implement the national curriculum through locally tailored adaptations, while their support arrangements depend on teachers, parents, foundations, volunteers, donors, vocational partners, and other community actors. The study is not designed to claim that all SLBs are equivalent to regular inclusive schools. Instead, it examines the transferable mechanisms through which a community-based school environment can operationalise educational rights and social welfare.

This framing is consistent with research on differentiated and individualised instruction. Evidence syntheses show that meaningful differentiation combines planned adaptation of content, process, time, product, and learning environment with a realistic consideration of learner readiness and context [18], [19], [20], [21], [22]. It also requires assessment systems that recognise growth and participation rather than merely comparing students against uniform benchmarks [23], [24]. Universal Design for Learning further supports this direction by encouraging multiple routes to engagement, representation, and action [25].

The social-welfare dimension is equally important. Social inclusion for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is shaped by both interpersonal relationships and opportunities for community participation [26], [27]. For children and young people with disabilities, social inclusion is inseparable from belonging, protection from exclusion, participation in everyday activities, and meaningful relationships [28]. These outcomes are strengthened when families have voice, schools communicate in accessible ways, and education services create genuine partnerships rather than delegating responsibility to parents [29], [30].

Accordingly, this study asks: (1) How do the five schools adapt curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment to support students with disabilities? (2) How are teachers, parents, and community actors involved in sustaining support? and (3) What community-based inclusive education model can be derived from the cross-case findings? The study contributes a practice-oriented model that connects inclusive education with the journal's concern for equitable learning opportunities, institutional capacity, and social welfare services. The remainder of the article describes the qualitative design, presents the cross-case findings, discusses their implications, and concludes with recommendations for policy and practice.

METHODS

Research Design

The study used a descriptive qualitative, multi-site case-study design. This design was selected because the research questions required an interpretive account of how schools organise inclusive learning, how stakeholders participate, and how a practice model emerges from cross-case patterns. The analysis followed an iterative, reflexive thematic process in which site-level evidence was first coded, then compared across schools to identify shared mechanisms, contextual variation, and implications for model development [31], [32].

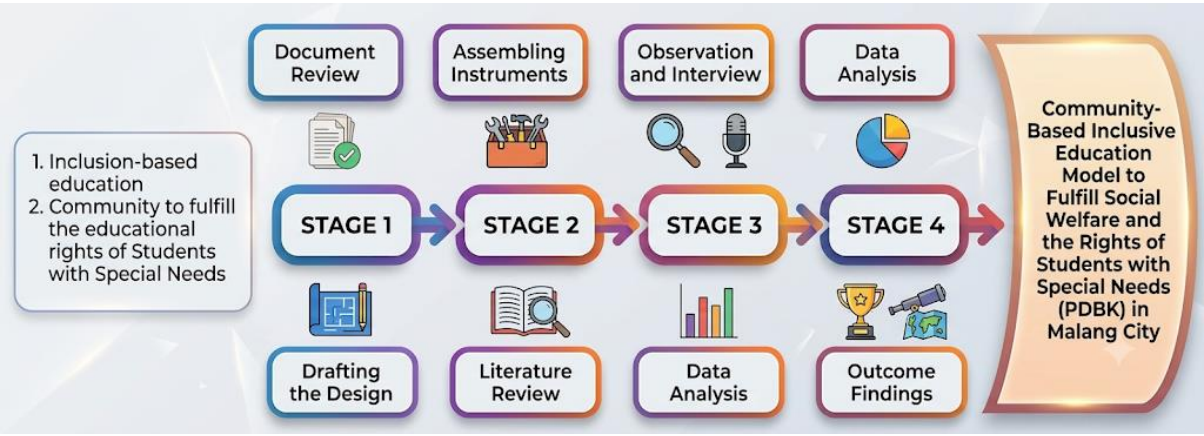


Figure 1. Research Design and Analytical Workflow

Study Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in five community-founded SLBs in Malang City: SLB Bhakti Luhur, SLB Sa Thi Ten, SLB YPAC, SLB Putra Jaya, and SLB Islam Yasindo. These sites were selected purposively because each had a long-standing community orientation and delivered education to students with heterogeneous disability-related support needs. The participant

group consisted of ten key informants: the principal and one teacher responsible for classroom or learning-support functions in each school. The participant selection prioritised individuals directly involved in curriculum adaptation, student support, family communication, and school-community collaboration.

Table 1. Study Sites and Primary Foci of Inclusive Support

Site	Curricular reference	Primary implementation emphasis	Community support profile
SLB Bhakti Luhur	National/Independent Curriculum with adaptation	Moderate academics, self-development, and functional learning	Foundation network, volunteers, and donors; comparatively sustained support
SLB Sa Thi Ten	National/Independent Curriculum with deep-learning orientation	Grouping by barrier-related needs and ability profiles	Volunteer and donor support, mostly activity-based
SLB YPAC	National/Independent Curriculum with adjusted learning outcomes	Academic readiness, visual learning, and coordination with specialists	Vocational collaboration, volunteers, and donor support
SLB Putra Jaya	National/Independent Curriculum with simplified learning outcomes	Ability-led academics and vocational preparation	Vocational links, employment-related opportunities, and financial support
SLB Islam Yasindo	National/Independent Curriculum reworked into small steps	Behavioural readiness, life skills, and individual adjustment	Volunteer, student, and donor assistance; limited continuity

Source: Authors' synthesis of field notes, interviews, documentation, and FGD (2026).

Table 2. Participant Profile and Analytic Relevance

Participant group	n	Core responsibilities relevant to this study
School principals	5	School leadership, curriculum direction, partnership decisions, resource mobilisation, and oversight of inclusive support.
Teachers / class-assistant or learning-support roles	5	Day-to-day adaptation of instruction, behavioural support, student monitoring, family communication, and implementation feedback.
Total	10	Key informants across the five study sites.

Source: Study participant record (2026).

Data Sources and Collection Procedures

Four complementary data sources were used: site observation, semi-structured interviews, documentation, and a focus group discussion (FGD). Observations focused on classroom organisation, learning media, participation patterns, teacher support, and community-linked activities. Interviews elicited accounts of curriculum adaptation, assessment, stakeholder roles, constraints, and strategies. Documentation included school learning records, individual report

formats, worksheets, and program materials where available. The FGD was used to interrogate emerging patterns and to refine the proposed model through collective reflection.

Table 3. Data Sources, Focal Domains, and Analytic Use

Data source	Focal domains	Analytic use
Observation	Classroom routines, learning media, teacher assistance, student participation, behavioural support, accessible practices	Corroborated how reported practices were enacted in daily school activity.
Semi-structured interviews	Curriculum adaptation, assessment, teacher roles, family engagement, community networks, constraints	Generated detailed site-level accounts and explanations of decision making.
Documentation	Curriculum plans, individual reports, worksheets, school programs, partnership activities	Traced formal tools and records supporting individualisation and community engagement.
Focus group discussion	Cross-site similarities and differences, feasibility of proposed model components, sustainability priorities	Supported cross-case synthesis and model refinement.

Source: Authors' synthesis of field notes, interviews, documentation, and FGD (2026).

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data analysis proceeded through familiarisation, initial coding, within-case organisation, cross-case comparison, theme construction, and model development. The analytical procedure was informed by reflexive thematic analysis and by quality principles that emphasise transparency, an audit trail, triangulation across data sources, and careful attention to the relationship between data and interpretation [31], [32], [33]. Findings were not treated as frequency counts. Instead, the analysis sought mechanisms that recurred across schools and identified conditions under which similar practices operated differently. The proposed model was then checked against the FGD discussion to improve conceptual clarity and practical fit.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Adaptive Curriculum as a Rights-Enabling Practice

All five schools used the national or Independent Curriculum as the formal reference point; however, none implemented it unchanged. Curriculum adaptation was a shared practice because teachers regarded a uniform sequence of learning outcomes as insufficiently responsive to diverse student readiness, communication profiles, and functional needs. The common pattern was not curriculum abandonment but selective translation: broad outcomes were simplified, broken into smaller steps, visualised, or redirected toward functional academics, self-development, behaviour regulation, and life skills.

Table 4. Cross-Case Curriculum Adaptation

Site	Adaptation approach	Dominant orientation
SLB Bhakti Luhur	National curriculum adjusted through deep-learning-informed methods and functional tasks	Balanced academic learning and self-development
SLB Sa Thi Ten	National curriculum adapted through grouping and deep-learning-oriented learning processes	Instructional efficiency for students with relatively similar support needs
SLB YPAC	Learning outcomes adjusted and supported through visualization	Academic balance, readiness, and accessibility of material
SLB Putra Jaya	Learning outcomes simplified according to ability levels	Ability-led academic progression
SLB Islam Yasindo	Curriculum reprocessed into small, attainable steps	Behavioural readiness and life skills before academic expansion

Source: Authors' synthesis of field notes, interviews, documentation, and FGD (2026).

Differentiation and Individualisation of Learning

The schools differed in how they organised groups, yet they converged on the principle that learning materials, pacing, media, and expected outputs had to be adjusted to the individual. The most visible modifications were material simplification, visual representation, staged questioning, task sequencing from simple to complex, grouping by comparable support needs where feasible, and individual adaptation where staffing or class composition made grouping impractical. These practices positioned differentiation as a necessary condition for meaningful access rather than as an optional teaching technique.

Table 5. Curriculum Modification and Differentiated Learning Practices

Practice dimension	Illustrative cross-case practice	Purpose
Material simplification	Reduction of task complexity; smaller learning steps; functionalised academic content	Match curriculum demands to student readiness and reduce avoidable cognitive overload.
Visualisation and demonstration	Pictures, modelling, demonstrations, staged prompts, and one-to-one explanation	Make concepts concrete and support communication and comprehension.
Flexible grouping	Grouping by barrier-related needs, ability level, or practical class balance where possible	Increase instructional responsiveness while managing limited staffing.
Task differentiation	Simple-to-complex assignments; adjusted quantities of material; varied response modes	Enable participation without requiring identical products or pace.

Practice dimension	Illustrative cross-case practice	Purpose
Behavioural habituation	Readiness routines, sitting tolerance, following simple instructions, emotion and behaviour support	Build preconditions for sustained engagement in learning and social interaction.

Source: Authors' synthesis of field notes, interviews, documentation, and FGD (2026).

Individualized Assessment and Teacher Mediation

Assessment across the five sites was developmental and non-comparative. Schools used combinations of Individualized Education Program (IEP) records, individual report cards, student worksheets, daily observations, and progress notes. Rather than ranking students against common achievement standards, teachers monitored change in academic performance, communication, behaviour, independence, and participation. Teachers therefore operated simultaneously as instructors, companions, behaviour managers, early assessors, self-development coaches, family communicators, and, in some sites, connectors to psychologists or vocational partners.

Table 6. Individualized Assessment and Teacher Roles

Dimension	Observed forms across the five schools	Contribution to rights and welfare
Individualized assessment	IEP, individual report cards, worksheets, daily observations, and progress records	Recognises personal development and provides feedback aligned with each student's support needs.
Assessment focus	Academic progress, behaviour, communication, self-care, independence, and participation	Broadens educational success beyond standardised academic comparison.
Teacher mediation	Teaching, mentoring, behaviour management, early assessment, coordination with parents, and vocational coaching	Connects learning processes with social-emotional support and welfare-oriented guidance.
Resource limitation response	Individual adjustments where specialist teachers or formal diagnostic resources are limited	Maintains responsiveness despite uneven institutional capacity.

Source: Authors' synthesis of field notes, interviews, documentation, and FGD (2026).

Families and Community Actors as Supportive, Unevenly Sustained Partners

Family participation varied across sites. Schools reported that some parents remained highly engaged, while others faced constraints related to work, income, distance, care demands, stigma, or confidence in assisting learning. In response, schools relied on regular communication, consultations on student development, school activities, and committee-based

coordination. The data indicate that communication functioned as the principal bridge when direct parental participation could not be sustained.

Community participation was broader than financial donations but narrower than full co-governance. It included foundation support, volunteers, donors, facility assistance, vocational training, student work opportunities, and skills activities. The sustainability of these contributions varied. SLB Bhakti Luhur reported the strongest continuity through foundation-related networks, while other schools described mainly periodic or project-based support. Thus, community participation enhanced inclusion but was not yet consistently institutionalised across the sites.

Table 7. Family and Community Participation Across the Study Sites

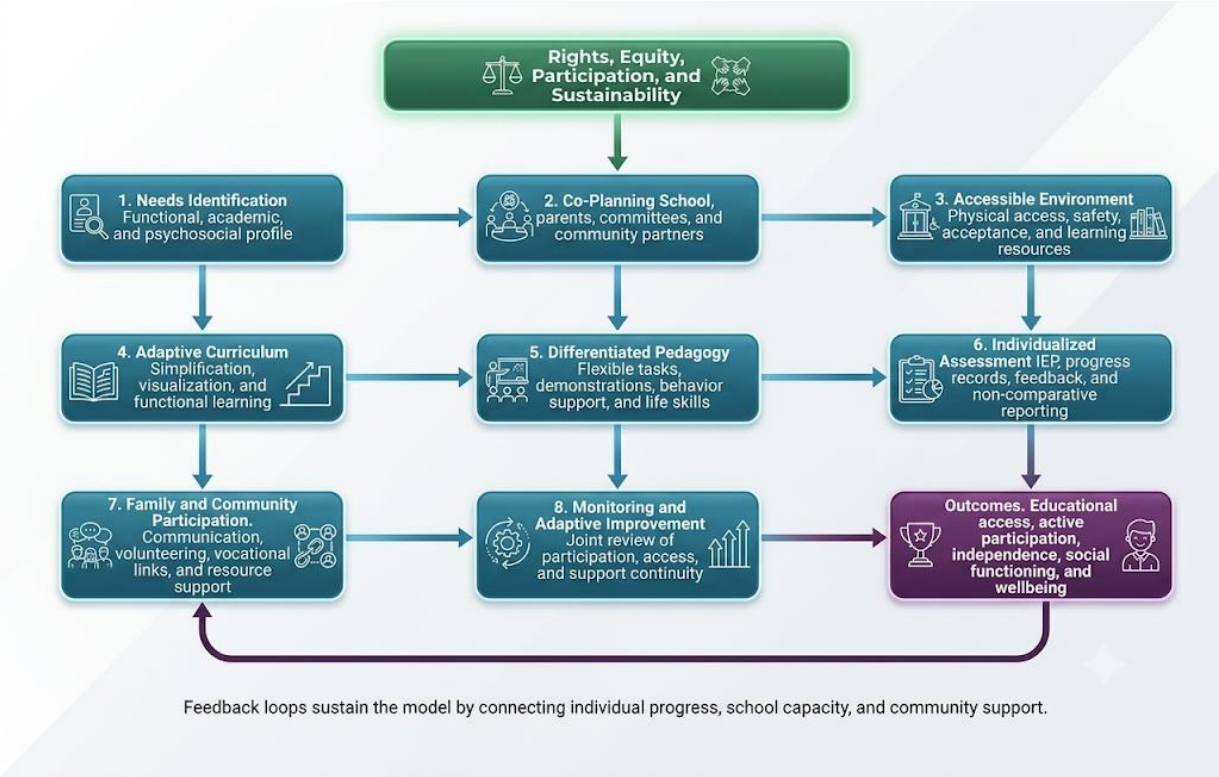
Participation domain	Common patterns	Sustainability challenge
Parent engagement	Consultation, home-school communication, committee involvement, support for routines and behaviour	Uneven participation due to time, economic pressure, distance, family conditions, and variable acceptance.
Foundation and donor support	Financial assistance, facilities, program ideas, volunteers, and organisational legitimacy	Strongest where long-term organisational networks are already established.
Vocational and skills partnerships	Café, laundry, work-skill, and employment-related activities	Often time-bound and dependent on specific partners or projects.
Volunteering	Support for activities, events, personnel assistance, and learning enrichment	Frequently incidental rather than embedded in an agreed long-term plan.

Source: Authors' synthesis of field notes, interviews, documentation, and FGD (2026).

Proposed Community-Based Inclusive Education Model

The cross-case synthesis produced an eight-component model. Its foundation is a rights-based commitment to equity, participation, and sustainability. The model begins with student needs identification and moves through shared planning, accessible environments, adaptive curriculum, differentiated pedagogy, individualized assessment, family and community participation, and joint monitoring. The logic is relational: educational adjustments are unlikely to remain effective if they are detached from family communication, accessible environments, workforce capacity, and sustained community support.

Figure 2. Community-Based Inclusive Education Model for Rights and Social Welfare



Source: Authors' synthesis of cross-case findings.

Table 8. Operational Components of the Proposed Model

Component	Operational mechanism	Expected proximal outcome
Rights-based foundation	Explicit commitment to equity, participation, non-discrimination, and sustainability	Inclusive decision-making becomes a shared institutional responsibility.
Needs identification and co-planning	Functional, academic, behavioural, and psychosocial profiling; planning with relevant stakeholders	Support priorities are linked to the learner's current context and goals.
Accessible learning environment	Physical safety, acceptance, visual support, structured routines, and learning resources	Reduced environmental barriers and increased readiness to participate.
Adaptive curriculum and pedagogy	Simplification, visualisation, functional learning, task differentiation, demonstrations, and behaviour support	Meaningful access to learning and developmental participation.
Individualized assessment	IEP, developmental records, observation, feedback, and contextual reporting	Recognition of personal progress and timely adjustment of support.

Component	Operational mechanism	Expected proximal outcome
Family and community partnership	Communication, volunteer coordination, vocational links, resource mobilisation, and committee involvement	Broader social support and opportunities beyond classroom instruction.
Monitoring and adaptive improvement	Joint review of access, participation, progress, partner continuity, and resource gaps	Accountability, learning from implementation, and stronger sustainability.

Source: Authors' synthesis of field notes, interviews, documentation, and FGD (2026).

Discussion

From Curriculum Adaptation to Rights-Responsive Welfare Support

The first contribution of the study is to show that curriculum adaptation functions as a rights-enabling practice. In each site, teachers interpreted the national curriculum through the practical question of what students could meaningfully access at a given time. This is consistent with scholarship that views differentiation and individualisation as central to inclusive education rather than as peripheral accommodations [20], [21], [22]. The Malang cases extend this insight by showing that adaptation also has a welfare function: breaking tasks into attainable steps, using visual supports, and recognising behavioural readiness can protect students from repeated failure, marginal participation, and inappropriate expectations.

The result should not be read as an endorsement of lowered expectations. Instead, it supports a progression-oriented approach in which high aspirations are pursued through accessible routes. The most effective interpretations of inclusive pedagogy combine flexible provision with a commitment to participation in valued learning experiences [8], [9], [33], [34], [35], [36]. This also aligns with Indonesian evidence showing that the quality of inclusion is shaped by teachers' beliefs and their capacity to translate broad principles into concrete classroom choices [13], [37], [38], [39], [40], [41].

Teachers as Educational and Social-Support Brokers

A second contribution concerns teacher work. The teachers in this study performed roles that exceeded conventional instruction: they assessed, mediated behaviour, coached self-development, interpreted progress for families, coordinated with other professionals, and sometimes supported vocational transition. Such role expansion is predictable in settings where specialist resources are limited, but it also creates a risk of overreliance on individual commitment. International evidence consistently identifies teacher confidence, attitudes, preparation, and perceived support as decisive for inclusive implementation [10], [11], [12], [35], [36].

The proposed model therefore treats workforce capacity as a system-level condition rather than a personal virtue. Schools need structures that reduce the fragility of teacher-mediated support: scheduled co-planning, practical adaptation tools, accessible referral pathways, peer learning, and partnership agreements that distribute responsibility. The study's

individualised assessment practices are promising because they connect instructional decisions to documented developmental information. Nevertheless, their sustainability depends on whether schools have time, training, and collaborative support to use those records for ongoing adaptation rather than merely compliance.

Family Communication and Community Participation: From Assistance to Co-Responsibility

The third contribution is the distinction between community support and community co-responsibility. The findings confirm that community actors can contribute facilities, volunteers, vocational opportunities, and financial assistance. However, episodic generosity does not necessarily produce a durable inclusive ecosystem. Social inclusion research highlights that participation is built through stable relationships, accessible community settings, and opportunities to take part in ordinary social roles [26], [27], [28]. In the present study, the clearest sustainability advantage appeared where foundations or durable networks connected schools to ongoing resources and relationships.

The same principle applies to families. Parent engagement varied, but the study does not interpret limited participation as parental indifference. Economic pressure, care responsibilities, distance, stigma, and unequal access to information can all constrain involvement. Evidence on family-school relationships suggests that effective partnerships depend on accessible communication, reciprocal trust, and recognition of family knowledge, especially for children with learning and intellectual disabilities [29], [30]. In practical terms, the model recommends communication plans that are flexible, routine, and developmental: teachers share observable progress, parents contribute information about home contexts, and both parties agree on feasible next steps.

Implications for Inclusive Education and Social Welfare Services

The proposed model aligns with an education-systems and social-welfare-services perspective. It does not reduce welfare to donations or protection alone; rather, welfare is pursued through participation, capability development, social functioning, and access to supportive relationships. This view is particularly relevant for students whose educational pathways depend on multiple institutions and informal networks. Existing Indonesian studies show that inclusive education policy and teacher perceptions are necessary but insufficient when support systems, facilities, and local coordination remain uneven [14], [15], [16], [17].

For schools, the immediate implication is to formalise their partnership practice: create a stakeholder map, identify the contribution and accountability of each partner, record the continuity of support, and integrate family/community discussion into student planning and review. For local government and social welfare providers, the model suggests a shift from project-based assistance to collaborative service pathways covering accessibility, teacher capacity, rehabilitation or psychosocial referral, vocational exposure, and safeguarding. This is compatible with the wider evidence that students with intensive needs benefit when educational participation is deliberately supported across academic and social domains [31], [32].

CONCLUSION

This study develops a community-based inclusive education model from the cross-case experiences of five SLBs in Malang City. The model positions inclusive education as a rights-based welfare ecosystem that integrates needs identification, shared planning, accessible environments, adaptive curriculum, differentiated pedagogy, individualized assessment, family and community partnership, and joint monitoring. The findings demonstrate that the schools already undertake substantial adaptive work through simplified and visualised curricula, flexible tasks, behavioural and life-skills support, individual progress assessment, and teacher-mediated family communication. Their principal vulnerability is not lack of commitment but the uneven continuity of resources, professional capacity, and community partnerships. Policy and practice should therefore prioritise durable cross-sector arrangements that turn episodic assistance into accountable, long-term support for educational access, participation, independence, social functioning, and wellbeing.

LIMITATIONS

The findings should be interpreted within the boundaries of a descriptive qualitative study involving five community-founded SLBs and ten key informants in one city. The study does not estimate prevalence, measure student outcomes longitudinally, or compare public and private schools, regular inclusive schools, and special schools. It also relies primarily on adult stakeholder accounts and school-level documentation; direct student and caregiver perspectives would strengthen future work. Further research should test the model across diverse Indonesian regions, include public and regular inclusive schools, examine the gendered distribution of care and advocacy responsibilities, and evaluate whether formalised community partnerships improve participation, wellbeing, and post-school transitions over time.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Corresponding Author

Juli Astutik – Department of Social Welfare, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Indonesia);
orcid.org/0009-0002-4122-2155
Email: astutik@umm.ac.id

Authors

Juli Astutik – Department of Social Welfare, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Indonesia);
orcid.org/0009-0002-4122-2155
Eko Rizqi Purwo Widodo – Department of Social Welfare, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Indonesia);
orcid.org/0009-0003-2255-6261
Zaenal Abidin – Department of Social Welfare, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Indonesia);
orcid.org/0000-0002-2006-7195

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

J.A. conceptualized the study, developed the research design, led data generation, and prepared the original manuscript draft. E.R.P.W. contributed to instrument preparation, data organisation, thematic interpretation, and manuscript revision. Z.A. contributed to theoretical refinement, model development, critical review, and final manuscript editing. All authors approved the submitted version and accept responsibility for the integrity of the work.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

"The authors declare no conflict of interest."

DECLARATION OF USE OF AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

The authors used generative AI-assisted language support during manuscript preparation to improve grammar, readability, structure, and citation formatting. The authors reviewed and edited all generated material, verified the reported findings against the study records, and remain fully responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the manuscript.

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