



## **SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF REGULAR STUDENTS TOWARD THE PRESENCE OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS**

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### **Abstract**

Inclusive education aims to give students with special needs access to learning and affects the social lives of regular students through interactions in diverse classrooms. This study seeks to describe the social dynamics of regular students expected to include students with special needs in collaborative learning at SMP Negeri 18, Malang. The research used a qualitative descriptive method, collecting data through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and learning documentation. The subjects were teachers who taught inclusively, Special Education Teachers, regular students, and students identified as having special needs. Data analysis involved data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, whereas data validity was tested using source and technique triangulation. The findings show that peers do not see students with disabilities as obstacles to learning. Instead, they fostered empathy, tolerance, care, and social responsibility. Teachers view inclusive classrooms as places for character education that improves the academic and social experiences of all students. Regular students often help their peers with special needs by explaining their instructions, completing tasks, or adjusting their pace of work in groups. These results confirm that inclusive classrooms can promote a culture of mutual acceptance and support collaborative learning. This study implies the need to develop teachers' strategies for managing peer interactions, not just adapting the curriculum for students with special needs.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Education; Regular Students; Students with Special Needs; Collaborative Learning; Tolerance

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## A. Introduction

Since schools are not only knowledge-transmitting institutions, the extent to which they prepare students for diversity has become a fundamental issue in contemporary educational systems, which is why inclusive education has emerged as an important concern. Therefore, in this sense, the inclusion of students with special needs in regular classrooms must be perceived not only as a question of educational services, but also as part of developing a just, responsive, and humane school environment. Ainscow (2020) highlights the need for systemic change in school practices to ensure that all children are included and provided educational equity through meaningful participation. This means that inclusive education must be defined as both a pedagogical and social agenda.

Inclusive education is based, at its core, on the rejection of unnecessary separation between students with special needs and regular students. Haug (2017) points out that inclusion must be horizontal (all students are there) and vertical (support for all student needs). Florian (2019) stressed that special education and inclusive education should go hand-in-hand instead of opposing each other to foster student participation. This is critical in order to avoid a limited perspective on inclusion, which simply means putting students with special needs into mainstream classes without appropriate pedagogies.

In inclusive practice in education, the success or failure of implementation is not simply a matter of teacher preparedness, curriculum development, or resourcing. The success of inclusion was also significantly influenced by the quality of social interaction between regular students and students with special needs. Rademaker et al. (2020) demonstrated that meaningful social contact and appropriate information can enhance the social participation of students with disabilities. These findings align with Schwab (2017), who asserted that authentic peer contact can foster more positive attitudes toward peers with special needs. Consequently, student-to-student relationships emerge as an important social variable to determine inclusive classroom quality.

Research surrounding inclusive education has predominantly placed students with special needs at the center of research. This focus is indeed important, especially since students with special needs need sufficient academic, social, and emotional support. However, this often creates a void about the experiences, process of making meaning, and responding to being with peers with special needs in the same classroom. Regular pupils make up most of the classroom, and their mindsets can either build a culture or dismantle rich inclusion. De Boer et al. (2012) demonstrate that students' attitudes toward peers with disabilities are closely linked to social acceptance and peer participation.

Collaborative learning structures must offer inclusive classrooms in terms of developing positive relationships between students. Collaborative learning offers students the opportunity to work with one another, explain concepts to each other, split

up tasks, and solve problems together. Perlado Lamo de Espinosa et al. (2021) study noted that collaboration in mainstream classrooms could be an important strategy used to support students with special needs participation. Muñoz-Martínez et al. (2020) This also highlights that the effectiveness of inclusion is affected by a teacher's proficiency in designing cooperative learning. Therefore, collaboration serves not only as a pedagogical tool, but also as a social strategy for promoting empathy and tolerance.

SMP Negeri 18 Malang shows that students with special needs study in the same class as regular students, so they can do learning together with normal children. This fosters a collegial culture that makes it easier for daily interaction. First, regular students do not reject or resist learning together with students who have special needs. Conversely, a fair number of ordinary students appear to actively assist their fellow students with special needs when the latter have difficulty registering an instruction or executing a task. In this regard, the classroom becomes a place for moral education, especially around teaching empathy, tolerance, and concern.

However, the social adaptation of other students in inclusive classes in junior high schools in Indonesia has received far less attention. Yet much of the research still focuses on themes such as policy implementation, preparation of teachers for working with students, and learning obstacles for students with special needs. Few studies have looked specifically at the experiences of non-inclusive students as subjects going through their own process of social learning. This gap is relevant because inclusive education cannot succeed if we only consider how the services can be adapted for students with special needs but do not pay attention to the social readiness of regular students.

This study adopts a novel perspective by positioning the presence of students with special needs as a pedagogical factor that enriches the social experiences of regular students within heterogeneous classroom communities. Drawing on Molina Roldán et al. (2021), who demonstrated that students without special needs also benefit from the dimensions of values, social relationships, and appreciation of diversity through participation in interactive inclusive learning environments, this study highlights the reciprocal nature of inclusive education. Thus, inclusive education extends its benefits beyond students with special needs by making a dual contribution to the social and academic growth of all learners.

This study aimed to describe the social dynamics of regular students in collaborative learning with special needs students in SMP Negeri 18 Malang. Specifically, this study analyzes teachers' perspectives, regular students' responses, the forms of collaborative interaction that emerge, and the social values that develop within inclusive classrooms. The research findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the study of inclusive education and practical contributions to schools by designing collaborative learning that is more responsive to diversity.

The research questions focused on three main areas. First, how do teachers interpret the presence of students with special needs in collaborative learning in inclusive classrooms? Second, how do regular students accept, interact with, and assist them with special needs during learning activities? Third, what social values are derived from shared learning experiences in a mixed class? These questions are relevant because in order to really make an inclusive education the success should not be only on the body presence of special needs students in ordinary class, but also on the social ties among all the pupils.

The conceptual framework of this article considers the inclusive classroom both as a pedagogical tool and as a social space. An inclusive classroom as a teaching space needs to promote the achievement of learning goals and academic participation of all students. The inclusive classroom also serves as a social space through the diversity of ability, learning preferences/styles, communication styles, and responses to differences. Therefore, the analysis in this article not only highlights learning practices but also examines how they foster empathy, tolerance, social responsibility, and the habit of mutual assistance in daily classroom life.

## **B. Method**

### **Research Design**

This was a qualitative, descriptive study. This methodology was selected because the research was centered on a holistic understanding of social dynamics enacted organically in an inclusive classroom environment. Descriptive qualitative research, for example, provides a general context to describe non-interventionism of researchers and manipulation on variables and manipulated in the natural environments behaviors, speech, interactions, and language by participants are constructed/occurred. Qualification of the Classroom: For this study, the classroom is characterized as a social situation in an organized arrangement where regular students, students with special needs, and other individuals engaged, including subject teachers and special education teachers, share collaborative learning activities.

A qualitative approach is particularly appropriate here because the constructs under investigation—social acceptance, peer support, and collaborative engagement—are contextual and relational in nature and cannot be adequately captured through numerical measurement alone. Understanding these dynamics requires an interpretive lens that attends to meaning, process, and context, as they unfold naturally within the inclusive classroom setting.

### **Research Location and Subjects**

The research was carried out in SMP Negeri 18 Malang, where inclusive education is based on a mix of students with special needs and normal students. The subjects of the research were subject teachers, Special Education Teachers, ordinary students, and

special needs children. Purposeful sampling was used to select informants given their direct engagement with inclusion. The informants' criteria were familiarity with inclusive classrooms, direct contact and knowledge of working with students with special needs, and willingness to provide information applicable to the research focus.

The site of this research was purposely selected, as the school has inclusive practices directly related to what we are studying. They accept special needs students and integrate them into learning interactions with non-special needs kids. This enables you to see a real-world setting as opposed to a simulated scenario. Selecting informants who were directly from teaching practice for the sampling process enriched the data.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to examine teaching and learning activities, student communication patterns, the forms of assistance provided by regular students to students with special needs, and teachers' strategies in managing differences in learning paces. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather perspectives from subject teachers, Special Education Teachers, regular students, and students with special needs regarding their experiences in inclusive classrooms. Documentation was used to supplement the data, particularly regarding learning activities, support notes, and collaborative activities in the classroom.

Observations were conducted by focusing on several indicators of social behavior, including forms of interaction among students, the responses of students with typical development when their peers with special needs faced difficulties, patterns of role distribution within groups, and the involvement of students with special needs in class discussions. We conducted interviews with teachers to qualitatively examine classroom management decisions, perceptions of barriers, and changes in the social attitudes of students with typical development, as perceived by teachers. The researchers conducted interviews with students to assess their subjective experiences of learning alongside peers with differing needs. Documentation served as supporting data to analyze learning activities, class notes, and evidence of relevant collaborative activities.

### **Research Instruments**

The research tool was the researcher herself, observing, interpreting, and arranging field data. The supporting instruments included observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and documentation sheets. The observation guidelines covered aspects of the interaction between regular students and students with special needs, regular students' responses to differences in ability, and forms of collaboration in task completion. The interview guidelines consisted of questions associated with social

acceptance, experiences assisting peers, learning difficulties, and the perceived advantages of inclusive classrooms.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis was performed in an interactive manner in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. In the reduction stage, data from the observation notes and interview transcripts were categorized into relevant groups based on what was being studied. In the actual display stage, they grouped the data into four overarching themes: social acceptance, empathy/care for peers, supportive peer relationships (peer), collaborative learning, and teacher influences. In the conclusion-drawing stage, the researcher weaves findings together from participants to obtain a holistic view of the social dynamics of typical students in an inclusive classroom.

This process of categorization included revisiting the field notes and interview transcriptions, and seeking out instances where a pattern of meaning occurred. Thematic Codes: Initially, codes were developed based on the written text of the study, that is, social acceptance, academic support, emotional support, distribution of roles, and teacher responses. These codes were thematically organized as teacher perceptions, acceptance of mainstream students, peer mediation, and the character development of the child. The results were discussed by connecting the field data with theory and existing literature on inclusive education, social contact, cooperative learning, and student engagement.

### **Data Validity**

Data validity was ensured through source and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from subject teachers, Special Education Teachers, regular students, and students with special needs. Methodological triangulation was conducted by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation. This process was carried out to ensure that the conclusions drawn did not rely on a single data source but were supported by consistent findings from various sources.

## **C. Findings and Discussion**

### **1. Findings**

The implication of the research study shows some positive dynamics regarding what regular students respond to the republic question of whether other students with special needs should be with them in collaborative learning. In addition to sharing learning spaces, inclusive classrooms nurture social interactions that foster empathy, tolerance, and responsibility. The results were categorized across four major themes: teachers' view of inclusive classrooms, acceptance by non-disabled students, collaborative peer support, and the reinforcement of social norms in the classroom.

The research results confirm this assumption in general; interactions between average students and students with special needs occur naturally. It arises together through classroom procedures, group work, task completion, informal conversation, and simple assisting exercises throughout the learning process. Regular students see what their fellow students need not through an abstract moral lecture, but by having to communicate, adapt the pace of their work, and be engaged with their group members. This suggests that inclusive classrooms have the potential to become concrete and sustainable social learning environments.

Theme of Findings	Field Indicators	Meaning of Findings
Teacher Perspectives	The teachers observed that the presence of students with special needs did not hinder the learning of regular students.	Inclusive classrooms are academic and social spaces that enrich one another.
Acceptance by Regular Students	Regular students do not view students with special needs as a burden to class.	Social acceptance occurs, which supports an inclusive culture.
Peer support	Regular students help with understanding instructions, completing assignments, and adapting to group work.	Collaborative learning serves as a means to internalize empathy and responsibility.
Social values	Attitudes of tolerance, care, patience, and appreciation for differences emerged.	The classroom functioned as a character-building laboratory.

### Teachers’ Perspectives on the Dynamics of Inclusive Learning

Subject teachers and Special Education Teachers believe that the presence of students with special needs in regular classrooms does not diminish the quality of learning for regular students. Teachers observe that the diversity of students’ abilities creates a richer learning experience. During classroom activities, regular students learn to adapt their communication styles, develop patience, and assist their peers who need support. Teachers state that such helping behaviors do not always arise from teacher instructions but often emerge spontaneously when regular students observe peers with special needs facing difficulties.

Teachers noted that fewer changes in the attitudes of ordinary students were slow. Initially, there will be some students still needing teacher guidance on how best to help their peers with special needs without causing the receiving student to feel different in a negative helping manner. However, with continued interactions, regular students start to show somewhat more spontaneous sensitivity. They not only help when called by the teacher but also step in upon noticing a class peer struggling to follow instructions.

This modification signifies inclusive education in the development of social habits through a cyclical process of habituation.

As the Special Education Teacher stated, peer interaction is integral to supporting the success of inclusive classrooms. Simple peer support for students with special needs, such as repetition of instructions, pointing to a specific page in the book, or an invitation to practice with the group, have been shown to be effective ways for them to access learning activities. However, other students also learn from this, as they can paraphrase simpler language. Explaining to peers cements regular students' understanding of the materials they study.

### **Regular Students' Acceptance of Students with Special Needs**

When interviewing students, the research consistently found that regular students did not see the presence of students with special needs as inhibitors of their own learning. Regular students have said that differences in capabilities are something that needs to be understood, not a reason to disallow peers from being involved in classroom activities. Each student learns at their own pace. This awareness builds a deep pattern of social acceptance, especially when learning activities are conducted in small groups.

Regular students are generally accustomed to differences in how people learn as just another part of life in the classroom. They learn that not all classmates grasp what the teacher is explaining at the same speed; therefore, lending a hand is just a part of it. During many of the discussions, traditional college students talked about how working with special needs peers taught them to become more patient and competent in their use of language. You need to be aware of this because tolerance is not just about accepting things passively, but it develops into the ability to adapt in communication styles so that other people continue feeling valued!.

One obvious indication that regular students are accepted is the involvement of special-needs children in classroom activities. When teachers break the class into groups, mainstream students often assign roles to peers with special needs. Even though these roles are basic, it is a significant engagement that helps ensure that students with special needs do not miss out on learning. Hence, it should be clear how social acceptance does not merely mean words but also deeds during the learning process.

### **Peer Assistance in Collaborative Learning**

The forms of peer support that emerge in collaborative learning include academic, communication, and emotional support. Academic support is evident when regular students help explain task instructions or demonstrate how to complete them. Communication support is evident when regular students use simpler language so that their peers with special needs can understand group activities. Be an Emotional Support: regular students encourage, invite participation, and comfort peers who seem less confident.

A common approach used in academics is to paraphrase instructions in a more friendly language. The regular students do not do the activity for special education (S.E.) students; they help them understand instruction, model an example, and playback/remind them of the steps. Communication assistance is partially realized when typical students act as intermediaries between the teacher's instruction and their peers' comprehension. On the other hand, emotional support was observed when peers expressed verbal encouragement, encouraged others to stay involved, or comforted one another about feeling lost. All three types of support illustrate how collaborative learning can broaden peers as sources of academic and social support.

Forms of Peer Assistance	Examples of Regular Students' Behavior	Impact on Inclusive Classrooms
Academic Support	Rephrasing the teacher's instructions and demonstrating how to complete tasks.	Increasing the involvement of students with special needs in learning activities.
Communication Support	Using simple sentences, providing cues, and repeating important information.	Reducing communication barriers among students.
Emotional support	Inviting them to join, offering encouragement, and not mocking mistakes.	Building a sense of safety and self-confidence.
Social support	Providing opportunities to participate in group and classroom activities.	Strengthening acceptance and sense of belonging.

**Strengthening the Values of Empathy, Tolerance, and Social Responsibility**

The SMP Negeri 18 Malang inclusive classroom illustrates that empathy and tolerance are learned through experience. Typical students do not just hear advice on respecting differences; they are actually in situations that require them to modify their speech, what they do when collaborating, and how to support each other. Such concrete experiences open a space for students to appreciate that differences in ability are an intrinsic part of their social lives to which they ought to show respect.

The empathy that develops in an inclusive classroom is pragmatic, since it manifests itself as tangible deeds. Regular students learn to read situations, understand their peers' expressions, and adjust their actions based on the needs evident in their interactions. Tolerance is also evident not merely in the form of refraining from teasing or rejecting others, but in the willingness to provide space for participation to peers who have different learning styles. Social responsibility develops when regular students understand that shared learning success is not achieved solely by individuals who grasp

the material quickly but also by the group's ability to ensure that all members can participate in the process.

The value of social responsibility is also evident in how regular students ensure that their peers with special needs remain engaged in classroom activities. Normal students start to know that the accomplishment of a group is not simply finishing jobs, but additionally including others in a task. Our findings show that collaborative learning in inclusive classrooms can afford the experience of learning not only as academic excellence but also (and just as importantly) as a formative social experience capable of constructing character.

### **Synthesis of Research Findings**

The four themes of the research findings indicate a strong connection between the structure of collaborative learning and the quality of social relationships in inclusive classrooms. Teachers' perspectives suggest that the diversity of students' abilities can be managed as a source of social learning rather than as a disruption to learning. The acceptance shown by typical students indicates that the presence of students with special needs is a natural part of the classroom community. The data from peer support show evidence of actual concrete practices of both academic and emotional support. This reinforces the impact shared experiences that learning moments have on building character in areas such as empathy, tolerance, and social responsibility.

Consequently, the results from this investigation validate that successful inclusion is not only bound to school policies but also relies upon the micro-activities occurring continuously at a classroom level. Inclusion policies create a formal space for students to be together, but it is within the interactions that this space can take on a socially inclusive nature. An inclusive classroom can become a learning community in which all students receive balanced support and opportunities to work, talk, and help each other with academic growth as well as character development.

## **2. Discussion**

Unless one gets to know what inclusive education actually means by way of functioning in a social process that happens through daily interactions, as also supported by research findings. Simply putting special-needs students inside regular classrooms itself does not create inclusion. Inclusion is the process of giving special-needs students an opportunity to learn and participate alongside their classmates accepted as members of the classroom community. The acceptance of regular students was a prominent factor that made inclusive learning more supportive. This correlates with Haug (2017), suggesting that inclusion is more than just a physical placement; it also needs to involve participation (meaningful as possible) and learning opportunities.

According to social contact theory, positive intergroup interactions are most effective when they involve cooperation, equal status between groups, common goals, and institutional support. Some of these aspects can also be seen in the inclusive classroom at SMP Negeri 18 Malang, shown by group activities and guidance from the teacher. Regular students and students with special needs are not merely in the same space but are engaged in shared tasks that require communication and mutual dependence. This explains why social contact in the classroom does not lead to rejection, but instead forms the basis for acceptance.

Regular positive responses toward students with special needs indicate that inclusive classrooms can serve as spaces for the formation of social attitudes. Rademaker et al. (2020) explained that intergroup contact can foster social participation in meaningful situations. In this study, contact between typical students and students with special needs was not formal or fleeting, but occurred through daily learning activities. This repeated and concrete contact provided typical students with opportunities to understand their peers' needs, recognize differences, and develop helping attitudes.

This is also in agreement with the work of Molina Roldán et al. (2021), which shows that students without special needs benefit from an interactive inclusive learning environment. The merits of this can be seen in what typical children experience as they adapt to being more patient, caring, and able to work with differences. In this manner, inclusive education not only provides the right to learn but also supports the social skills of normal students. It is this lens that must be utilized to dispel the myth that inclusion only serves students with special needs.

Collaborative learning creates a context in which everyone is good at something and positive/good social dynamics. Group work with students means dealing not only with academic tasks but also with communication, role distribution, and differences in ability. Pero Lamode Espinosa et al. According to Yanse et al. (2021), cooperative learning is a means of accessing students with special needs in regular classrooms. In this study, group work provided regular students with concrete opportunities to help their peers with special needs without having to wait for the teacher's instructions. This spontaneous assistance indicates that the value of empathy is beginning to be internalized in student behavior.

However, without careful design, collaborative learning in inclusive classrooms does not run smoothly. Overly competitive groups may stigmatize students with special needs, who are believed to slow team task completion. On the other hand, groups organized around adaptable roles and collective objectives can offer a more just environment for involvement. Therefore, teachers need to manage group composition, provide clear instructions, offer role options, and monitor to ensure that peer assistance continues to support the independence of students with special needs. With such

management, collaboration does not turn into domination by regular students but becomes a two-way learning process.

However, the quality of inclusive interactions remains firmly within the teacher's domain. That teachers not only present content, but must also structure group work, model appropriate words of respect, and ensure that students with special needs are not ostracized from any classroom activity. Iacono et al. (2023) and Flatter and Southam (2023) show that collaborative teaching and pedagogical support can make inclusive education more effective. In the context of SMP Negeri 18 Malang, the presence of subject teachers and Special Education Teachers has a role in regulating balancing academic goals and social support in class.

Special Education Teachers The Connecting Force Between the Individual Needs of Learners with Special Needs and Regular Classroom Learning Demand The role is not only technical, such as assisting a student to change the desk setup, but also social, so Special Education Teachers can offer subject teachers guidance on how to assist with relationships in a safe manner. Through collaboration between subject teachers and Special Education Teachers, inclusiveness in classrooms becomes responsive to how different students are. In this context, inclusion was successful when teaching as a team to adopt the individual concerns of a particular teacher.

The positive social dynamics found in this study do not imply that inclusive classrooms are free from challenges. Differences in learning paces require careful management. Teachers must ensure that peer support does not turn into dependency or make regular students feel burdened. Simultaneously, students with special needs still need to be given space to be independent according to their capacity. Therefore, collaborative learning in inclusive classrooms requires the design of proportional roles so that all students can participate meaningfully.

This study highlights the potential of treating ordinary students as key players in inclusive education. Historically, inclusion programs have focused more on teacher training and the availability of services for special-needs students. While both aspects are important, they are insufficient if a culture of peer support is not established. De Boer et al. (2012) demonstrate that students' attitudes toward peers with disabilities are linked to social acceptance. Therefore, schools must design habituation strategies, collaborative activities, and classroom reflections that explicitly foster an attitude of accepting diversity.

With typical students being the biggest part of the classroom ecosystem, their inclusion is significant, and therefore parental involvement in bringing up this component is critical. If students consider typical embracing inclusive attitudes, students with special needs will feel increasingly secure to engage in learning. On the contrary, through positive climate sensitization and resentment towards students objected to special needs

for matters of inclusion or indifference, policies may be preserved only in physical access to students while perpetuating exclusion from social interaction. Thus, they must prepare programs that integrate what are usually services for individual students with special needs and promote a classroom climate that encourages diversity.

One practical implication of this research is the importance of reinforcing designs that incorporate opportunities for safe task-oriented interactions between students. Peer-mentoring strategies, heterogeneous groups, tiered collaborative tasks, and post-learning social reflection. These strategies enable typical students to learn to assist without dominating, whereas students with special needs retain the opportunity to take on roles. In this way, inclusive learning can evolve from merely a school policy to a living pedagogical practice within the daily classroom.

Another implication of this research relates to the strengthening of character education in junior high schools. Values of empathy, tolerance, cooperation, and social responsibility are often taught as a fix through normative material, but an inclusive classroom gives the value context in real life. In tolerance, students are not just taught, but rather subjected to situations that demand them to possess qualities of patience, bearing with people who have a different viewpoint or thought process, listening carefully, and adapting. Since character dispositions are acquired through practice, reflection, and repetition in day-to-day classroom life, experiences alone provide a much more germane foundation for the enduring social orientations they tend to support.

Regarding school policy, this emphasizes developing a more defined support structure. Schools can create norms for inclusive group work, prepare short-term professional learning opportunities for teachers in approaches to collaboration, and build classroom reflections for addressing how students feel about their experience working together to learn. Students also need to understand how their attitude changes, which requires that they reflect either orally or in writing (or even just a simple journal). Thus, inclusive education is not simply a matter of administrative policy, but rather the practical institutionalization of a culture within schools through well-established pedagogical practices.

A limitation of this study was that the research was conducted in one school context, meaning generalizability to all inclusive schools is not intended through statistical means. The data used also focused on observations, interviews, and documentation; therefore, changes in students' attitudes have not yet been measured quantitatively. However, this study is robust in terms of the level of detail it provides regarding the social interactions that occur naturally in classroom situations. In future, comparative studies across various schools, mixed-methods design or attitude scale instruments including empathy and tolerance measures may be applied to track more subtle shifts in these measures among regular students

Future studies should further explore the immediate impacts of various special needs and subject characteristics as well as student grouping strategies on the quality of interactions among students with other students in inclusive classrooms. Longer-term studies are warranted to determine if positive patterns of peer support remain over time and what features schools employ to prevent students with special needs from becoming overly reliant on their regularly developing peers. Thus, the development of inclusive education must move beyond mere acceptance toward instructional designs that ensure the participation, independence, and social growth of all students.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The conclusion of this research is that the social interaction in inclusive learning SMP Negeri 18 Malang of regular students toward special-needs students is more positive. Regular students do not see special-needs students as distractions from their learning, but rather as members of their classroom community who need to be treated with respect and kindness and assisted along the way. The interactions that occur during collaborative learning promote empathy, acceptance, nurturing, patience, and social responsibility. Educators see the inclusive classroom as a dual-purpose area for character education, which provides dual benefits for students with special needs and non-special education students alike.

Evidence suggests that when teachers manage peer interactions and create opportunities for collaborative work, inclusive classrooms may operate like social laboratories. This research implication is for schools to do more than just beef up services for students with special needs but also build an inclusive peer culture. Further research should involve a broader sample of informants, employ longitudinal observations, and examine the relationship between inclusive interactions and students' character development in greater depth.

This study theoretically contributes to the growing knowledge about inclusive education by integrating the psychosocial adjustment of students without disabilities in addition to those with special needs. In practical terms, this means that collaborative learning is designed so that students with and without special needs work toward common objectives under the coordinated support of teachers and special educators. If it is appropriately managed, inclusive classrooms could be classrooms that are humanistic, productive and responsive on the needs of character education in junior high schools.

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