



## Impact of teacher educational background on special education environment

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*Introduction.* Schools for students with disabilities are one of the essential programs that the government should pay attention to. There are many aspects to consider in providing special education services, including the quality of learning. Teachers play a crucial role in the quality of learning for students with special needs. The role of teachers can be measured through their level of work involvement. *Objective.* The purpose of this study is to determine the level of work involvement of teachers in special and inclusive schools concerning the quality of learning. *Method.* We used the quantitative research method with descriptive statistical data analysis. The sample included 64 teachers from special education schools and 46 teachers from inclusive schools. *Results.* The study results show that teachers' work involvement in schools for students with disabilities falls under the high category. In contrast, the work involvement of teachers in inclusive schools falls under the average category. *Conclusion.* It can be concluded that teachers in schools for students with disabilities are more optimal in fulfilling their roles in providing quality learning for children with special needs than teachers in inclusive schools.

*Keywords:* work engagement, quality of learning, special education, teacher performances

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## Introduction

Schools for students with disabilities are educational services provided expressly for students with mental, intellectual, sensory, or physical disabilities which are grouped into various categories. The Indonesian government has ensured the right of education for children with disabilities through Article 32 Paragraph 1 of the National Education System Law. Special education services are provided to assist them in reaching their full potential as much as possible. In Indonesia, Schools for students with disabilities are divided into two special services for students with disabilities: segregated and inclusive. The segregated service system is generally referred to as schools for students with disabilities, which specifically provide education services for SWD (Students with Disabilities) and are separate from the regular education service system for children (Finnvold, 2019; Irawati, 2020).

Meanwhile, schools that accommodate regular children represent the education service that utilizes the inclusive system. Then, it provides inclusive education for SWD alongside other students within one educational environment (Pit-ten Cate et al., 2018; Wilson et al., 2019). This milestone is a significant breakthrough, and the government has made new changes regarding inclusive school policies, ranging from perspectives and attitudes to educational processes focusing on individual needs without discrimination. In Indonesia, inclusive schools have been implemented since 2001, where regular schools integrate SWD in the same school environment with two types based on their needs and academic abilities. First, this system is called pull-in, where SWD students with good learning readiness can study in class with non-SWD students. At the same time, pull-out is done by placing SWD with special needs services in different classes or special classes. Nevertheless, the success of implementing such programs is strongly related to the role of teachers in schools (Galaterou & Antoniou, 2017; Junaidi, 2020; Parey, 2019).

Teachers are responsible for the quality of the conducted learning process (J. Lee, 2018; S. W. Lee & Lee, 2020). Providing learning for students with disabilities requires specific competencies that teachers must possess. Such requirements are based on the fact that students with disabilities have diverse characteristics that impact their abilities and unique learning needs (Irvan & Dewi, 2018). Teachers are considered a source of learning, indicating that the role of teachers is to ensure the quality of the education provided to students. However, in Indonesia, the number of teachers with a background in special education is minimal. Based on the calculated data, the number of school-aged individuals with disabilities in Indonesia exceeds 2 million. In contrast, the number of teachers with a background in Special Education is relatively limited (Amka, 2019). Such inequality is certainly irrational, resulting in the involvement of teachers who lack the appropriate competencies. This situation refers to the phenomenon that only 14 universities in Indonesia have special

education study programs. They can only produce between 500 and 800 graduates of special education teachers each year. The situation triggered the importance of measuring the quality of learning involving special education teachers. This article is an initial step as a preliminary study to understand the extent of teachers' involvement in carrying out their duties and roles as teachers for students with disabilities. In the context of inclusive education, especially in Indonesia, there are two teachers with different roles. The Class Teacher plays a role in guiding learning classically, and the Special Assistant Teacher plays a role in providing individual assistance for SWD. This clear division of roles ensures that each student receives adequate attention and support according to their needs. Therefore, completing this study is essential as it is closely related to the impacts of learning quality. Teacher performance is one of the indicators that can be observed to assess the quality of the education provided, including whether it falls under the high-quality category (Setyosari et al., 2022; Widajati et al., 2020). If learning is conducted effectively, it can be ensured that the quality of education will continue to improve.

### Method

This research investigates the involvement of teachers both in schools for students with disabilities and inclusive schools. This research utilizes a quantitative research method. Next, the data is presented in descriptive form based on the measurement criteria of the instrument. Data was collected by involving teachers in Malang City, Indonesia. Teacher participants were limited to those with significant roles during learning for students with disabilities, and this project included 64 special school teachers and 46 inclusive school teachers.

The instrument used was the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-17) questionnaire (Schaufeli et al., 2003). There are three indicators measured by UWES, namely Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption, which aim to depict teachers' performance in delivering quality learning for students with disabilities (Irvan & Jauhari, 2023; Kristiana et al., 2019). The UWES-17 consists of 17 statement items, which include Vigor (6 items), Dedication (5 items), and Absorption (6 items) (see Table 1). Based on the reliability test results with Cronbach Alpha, it shows a score of .914, so this data can be interpreted as reliable (see Table 2). The data analysis method in this research utilizes quantitative descriptive analysis techniques. The data is then processed in numerical form and presented descriptively with statistical information according to the data. The results of the data analysis are used as a basis for considering new hypotheses regarding the quality of learning provided in the special education setting.

**Table 1***Cronbach Alpha Statistic*

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
v1.1	68.98	157.177	.728	.904
v1.2	69.24	161.830	.700	.906
v1.3	70.11	164.055	.460	.913
v1.4	69.85	161.065	.609	.908
v1.5	69.15	163.910	.623	.908
v1.6	69.33	164.402	.553	.910
d2.1	68.72	173.229	.300	.914
d2.2	68.87	160.294	.750	.905
d2.3	68.65	170.632	.474	.912
d2.4	68.52	170.744	.494	.911
d2.5	69.26	160.330	.600	.909
a3.1	69.35	164.499	.514	.911
a3.2	70.13	162.738	.558	.910
a3.3	69.15	161.021	.731	.905
a3.4	70.15	161.065	.676	.906
a3.5	69.78	155.329	.707	.905
a3.6	69.89	155.877	.652	.907

**Table 2***Reliability Statistics*

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.914	17

**Results**

The collected data includes a tabulation of the work involvement scores among SWD teachers, accompanied by the demographic information of the questionnaire respondents. The data tabulation will be processed to obtain the level of work involvement among special needs and inclusive school teachers.

**Table 3**  
*Demographic data*

Working institution	Education			Frequency
	SE	NSE	Unknown	
SPECIAL SCHOOL	36 (56.25%)	12 (18.75%)	16 (25%)	64
INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS	4 (25%)	35 (76%)	7 (15.3%)	46

SE: Special Education Background; NSE: Non-Special Education Background

The respondents' demographics in Table 3 show that the research respondents amounted to 110 individuals, consisting of various categories of workplaces and their highest level of education attained. In schools for students with disabilities, there were 36 respondents, representing 56.25% of the total sample, with their highest education being in SE. There were 12 respondents, representing 18.75%, with NSE. Additionally, there were 16 respondents, or 25%, whose highest education level was unknown. There were four respondents in inclusive schools, representing 8.7% of the total sample, with their highest education being SE. There were 35 respondents, or 76%, with NSE. Additionally, there were seven respondents, or 15.3%, whose highest education level was unknown. Teachers' work involvement refers to a state in which they are mentally and physically engaged in their work, resulting in optimal individual performance and the ability to achieve predetermined work targets. Teachers' work involvement is measured using the UWES-17, which consists of three indicators: Vigor (enthusiasm at work), Dedication (Dedication to work), and Absorption (absorption in position).

Here are the results of the descriptive analysis of the questionnaire data on work involvement per indicator distributed to schools for students with disabilities and inclusive school teachers.

**Table 4**  
*Special school teachers score*

	N=64	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
VIGOR	64	16	32	24.95
DEDICATION	64	17	30	24.86
ABSORPTION	64	13	32	23.75

Overall, teachers in schools for students with disabilities are highly involved in their work (see Table 4). However, one indicator, absorption (immersion in work), obtained the lowest average score of 23.75 overall among the respondents of special school teachers. Based on the data (see Table 2), it can be seen that the average score of the absorption indicator is lower at 32% compared to the average scores of the vigor and dedication indicators. Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers in schools for students with disabilities have a lower level of absorption and dedication in their work compared to vigor.

**Table 5**

*Inclusive school teachers score*

	N= 64	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
VIGOR	46	6	33	25.52
DEDICATION	46	17	30	24.46
ABSORPTION	46	13	34	23.72

Based on Table 5, the aspect with the lowest average score overall is the absorption indicator, which represents the level of immersion in work. In summary, it can be concluded that teachers in schools for students with disabilities and inclusive schools have a lower level of absorption in their work compared to the aspects of vigor and dedication. Overall, inclusive school teachers are relatively involved in their work optimally. However, one indicator, absorption (immersion in work), obtained the lowest average score of 23.72 (see Table 5) overall among the respondents of inclusive school teachers. Absorption in work means that a worker is fully focused and enjoys their work, making it difficult for them to detach themselves from their work. Therefore, teachers in inclusive schools have a less optimal level of absorption in their work, which indicates that they are not fully immersed in their work when dealing with SWD.

After obtaining the results of the work involvement for each indicator, the researcher categorized the work involvement scores into five categories: Very High ( $x > 94$ ), High ( $80 < x \leq 94$ ), Average ( $67 < x \leq 80$ ), Low ( $53 < x \leq 67$ ), and Very Low ( $x < 53$ ). These five categories will represent each level of work involvement that teachers of SWD in special and inclusive schools possess. Through this categorization, the researcher conducted quantitative descriptive data analysis to determine the frequency of samples and the percentage of respondents in each category of the teachers' work involvement questionnaire scores. Here are the results of the data analysis for the level of work involvement of teachers in schools for students with disabilities.

Table 6 shows that teachers in schools for students with disabilities, on average, have high work involvement. It means that teachers in schools for students with disabilities tend to have optimal levels of enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption in their work, resulting in their work involvement falling into the high category.

**Table 6**

*The level of work involvement of special school teachers*

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percent
VERY LOW	6	9.4	9.4
LOW	12	18.8	18.8
AVERAGE	20	31.3	31.3
HIGH	23	35.9	35.9
VERY HIGH	3	4.7	4.7
TOTAL	46	100.0	100.0

The descriptive analysis results of the questionnaire data given to teachers in schools for students with disabilities indicate that work involvement is classified into the high category, with 36% (see Table 6) of the total. In this case, it means that teachers' work performance is also in the good category, indicating that the working institutions of teachers will continue to develop and adapt to the evolving educational landscape in the future.

**Table 7**

*The level of work involvement of inclusive school teachers*

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percent
VERY LOW	3	6.5	6.5
LOW	10	21.7	21.7
AVERAGE	19	41.3	41.3
HIGH	12	26.1	26.1
VERY HIGH	2	4.3	4.3
TOTAL	46	100.0	100.0

Table 7 shows that teachers in inclusive schools have an average level of work engagement. This data indicates that teachers in inclusive schools have good enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption in their work. Still, it is not as optimal as individuals with work involvement in the high and very high categories. The descriptive analysis of the survey data provided to teachers in inclusive schools indicates that teachers' work involvement in inclusive settings is average. This

hypothesis means that teachers in inclusive schools demonstrate moderate enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption in their work, with a percentage of 41%. This explains that teachers in inclusive schools are reasonably engaged mentally and physically in their work, although not to the same extent as teachers in schools for students with disabilities. The opinion states that teachers with a good level of work involvement will have higher performance and productivity in their work, as well as healthier social relationships with their colleagues, compared to those who do not have good work engagement.

### **Discussion**

Learning quality is the key to optimizing learning outcomes (Khamroev, 2021). Learning quality is one of the critical aspects that institutions must consider to provide education that meets the standards. Therefore, teachers need to be continuously evaluated as part of the support system. The educational background has long been studied in various sectors of employment associated with human resource performance (Carver et al., 2008). Such evaluation can be conducted through multiple means, such as classroom observations, teacher performance assessments, and the utilization of learning outcome data. Teacher work involvement can be defined as the level of motivation and dedication they possess in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. The higher the work involvement of teachers, the greater their motivation to contribute their best efforts in achieving educational goals (Minghui et al., 2018).

Teachers play a crucial role in the development of learning quality. They educate and guide students to achieve the set learning objectives. Such demands are justified as teachers are at the forefront, directly dealing with various challenges in the classroom learning process (Nugraha et al., 2022). The task of special school teachers is to facilitate learning quality adjusted to the needs and abilities of SWD (Septiana, 2017). The approach used by teachers is crucial in helping SWD understand and learn the given materials (Betts et al., 2013). However, these demands require specific skills that teachers generally do not possess. In Indonesia's education context, not all teachers know how to treat SWD. Specifically, Special Education study programs are available in several universities in Indonesia. This situation creates one of the challenges in realizing quality education (Mambela, 2010). Therefore, the level of teacher work engagement is considered an indicator of the learning quality they provide for students.

The work engagement of special school teachers plays a role in preparing and implementing the learning activities suitable for the needs and characteristics of each child with special needs (Irvan & Jauhari, 2023). In the process, teachers of students with disabilities (both in special and inclusive schools) have a heavier workload than general education teachers. Based on



their responsibilities, teachers are required to be able to conduct assessments and formulate learning content. Meanwhile, teachers in inclusive schools also need to be able to coordinate with homeroom or subject teachers (Dharma, 2020) so that the learning designs they develop are consistent with the content implemented in the classroom (Saloviita, 2020; Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021). Of course, this situation is associated with their educational background, which generally relates to the skills they have acquired beforehand. Several cases have highlighted that educational background significantly influences student achievement (Carver et al., 2008; Delano et al., 2018; Pant & Srivastava, 2019).

The three dimensions of work engagement in the UWES-17 instrument measure teachers' performance in carrying out their professional roles (Carmona-Halty et al., 2019; Tran et al., 2020). Having high levels of the three indicators of work engagement, teachers can fulfill their roles as professionals (Klassen et al., 2012; Minghui et al., 2018). Theoretically, that statement strengthens the hypothesis that teacher work engagement impacts the quality of learning (Thaariq et al., 2023). The data analysis shows that most special education teachers in Malang have a high level of work engagement, representing 36% of the 64 respondents. From the three dimensions of the indicators, it is known that spirit and dedication have the same score, 34%, while appreciation has a slightly lower score, 32%. This indicates that although teachers in Malang's schools for students with disabilities have high work involvement, they have less work appreciation than spirit and dedication. These findings reinforce previous research results that experience is also associated with spirit and dedication in professional work (Arifin et al., 2014; Browning & Heinesen, 2007). Furthermore, the data presented earlier shows that respondents with SE have a more significant number than those without it. This reinforces the fact that the linearity of educational backgrounds influences the high level of work involvement among them (Perera et al., 2018; Topchyan & Woehler, 2021).

Meanwhile, inclusive school teachers are classified into the average or moderate category, representing 26%. This situation indicates that most inclusive teachers in Malang have suboptimal work involvement compared to special school teachers. The scores of each indicator dimension among inclusive teachers in Malang become important to consider. The score for spirit is 35%, dedication is 33%, and appreciation is 32%, which proves that inclusive school teachers have spirit and dedication in their work. However, the figures indicate they lack appreciation for their role as inclusive school teachers. These findings support the previous statement that educational linearity relates to teachers' work involvement scores. Therefore, this finding raises the suspicion that the scale of teacher engagement impacts the quality of learning. Previous literature reviews have highlighted the scale of teacher engagement that has implications for the quality of learning (Irvan et al., 2024).

By demonstrating high work involvement, teachers can prove their commitment to providing learning quality, meeting performance targets, and achieving desired end goals (Sancar et al., 2021). High work involvement can also positively influence teachers' work enthusiasm and provide them with comfort in accomplishing various tasks (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021; Skinner et al., 2021). Such behavior can help create a more positive and productive work environment (Nugraha et al., 2022), ultimately enhancing the learning quality of SWD. However, several other studies concluded that work engagement produces a chain effect with other aspects. It does not directly affect the quality of learning and may intersect with aspects of job performance (Kuok et al., 2020) and self-efficacy (Rosyanti et al., 2021).

High work involvement in dedication, spirit, and appreciation can help teachers perform their professional roles to improve performance (Krismanto et al., 2023). Inclusive school teachers' mismatch in educational backgrounds contributes to assessing their professionalism in providing quality services for students with disabilities (Azizah, 2021; Yusuf, 2012). However, these findings serve as an important foundation for further research hypotheses. Moreover, this study supports relevant stakeholders in making informed decisions as follow-up actions to optimize educational services for children with disabilities.

### **Conclusion**

Work involvement exhibited by teachers in several schools for students with disabilities in Malang falls into the high category. This finding indicates that teachers participate optimally, maximizing their full abilities to ensure their roles are effectively carried out. Meanwhile, the work involvement of inclusive school teachers in Malang is classified into the moderate category. This indicates that teachers in inclusive schools are sufficiently involved in their work but not as optimal as teachers in schools for students with disabilities. Educational institutions are advised to provide alternative solutions through training and other activities that can enhance teacher competence. Indeed, these alternatives also serve as solutions to address the limited availability of a workforce with relevant educational backgrounds. The various findings and results of this research analysis can be valuable as a foundation for further research. This study adds to the literature on human resource management in the context of inclusive and special education, as well as the importance of teachers' roles in supporting the learning of students with special needs. However, this study has not considered all factors that may influence teachers' work engagement, such as support from the principal, availability of resources, and workload. Future research is suggested to explore other factors that influence teachers' work engagement in inclusive schools, such as support from colleagues, school policies, or adequate availability of resources. In addition, evaluating the

effectiveness of recommended training and professional development programs can be an important step to understanding whether the solutions provided actually improve teachers' engagement and competence.

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## Uticaj obrazovanja nastavnika na specijalno obrazovno okruženje

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*Uvod:* Specijalne škole su jedan od osnovnih vidova obrazovanja na koji vlada treba da obrati pažnju. Postoji mnogo aspekata koje treba razmotriti u pružanju usluga specijalnog obrazovanja, uključujući kvalitet učenja. Nastavnici imaju ključnu ulogu u kvalitetu učenja učenika sa teškoćama u razvoju i invaliditetom. Uloga nastavnika može se meriti kroz njihov nivo uključenosti u rad. *Cilj:* Svrha ove studije je da se utvrdi stepen radne uključenosti nastavnika u specijalnim i inkluzivnim školama u pogledu kvaliteta učenja. *Metod:* Korišćena metoda istraživanja je kvantitativna, sa deskriptivnom statističkom analizom podataka. Uzorkom su obuhvaćena 64 nastavnika zaposlenih u specijalnim školama i 46 nastavnika zaposlenih u inkluzivnim školama. *Rezultati:* Rezultati studije pokazuju da radna uključenost nastavnika u specijalnim školama spada u visoku kategoriju. Nasuprot tome, radna uključenost nastavnika u inkluzivnim školama spada u kategoriju proseka. *Zaključak:* Može se zaključiti da su nastavnici u specijalnim školama optimalniji u ispunjavanju svoje uloge u obezbeđivanju kvalitetnog učenja za decu sa posebnim potrebama od nastavnika u inkluzivnim školama.

*Ključne reči:* radno angažovanje, kvalitet učenja, specijalno obrazovanje, učinak nastavnika

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