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Research Article

Assessing Inclusivity: Evaluating School Facilities For Students With Disabilities In Terengganu, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The issue of Person with Disabilities Students (PWDs) and facilities are closely intertwined, with the Malaysian government implementing various innovative approaches to address unsatisfactory enrollment. The objectives of this study are to evaluate how well educational facilities in Besut, Terengganu meet the needs of PWDs. It aims to analyze the relationship between facility quality and PWD enrollment statistics while identifying other facility related issues. Additionally, the study assesses the alignment of universal design principles (UDP) with existing facilities to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness. Quantitative methods were employed in this study and involved 281 PWDs aged 10 to 18 years have an active OKU card registered with the Department of Social Welfare (JKM). The results show that majority of respondents (83.3%) are satisfied with the facilities for PWDs, and they believe that the facilities and resources have a positive impact on learning. However, there is a minority who are dissatisfied and need to be improved (16.7%). In conclusion, the government's innovative approach to addressing PWDs facility issues has shown positive impacts. Despite this, some facilities are still deemed inadequate by respondents. Therefore, further research is necessary to explore input from other stakeholders, such as teachers and management, to analyze problems in greater detail and uncover novel solutions.

Keywords: *Person with Disabilities (PWDs); facilities; students; inclsivity; Universal Design Principles (UDP); Malaysia.*

1 *Introduction*

1.1 Background

Inclusive education is a cornerstone of modern educational systems, aiming to provide equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. In Malaysia, efforts to promote inclusive education have been ongoing, with initiatives such as the Program Pendidikan Inklusif (PPI) and the Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP) being implemented by the Ministry of Education. Despite these efforts, challenges persist in ensuring that educational facilities are fully accessible and supportive for PWDs. The lack of adequate facilities, insufficient resources, and limited awareness about disability rights often hinder the effective integration of PWDs into mainstream educational settings. The overall findings by Chan et al. (2022) also indicate that inclusive education for PKU is still far from being achieved. In the context of Besut, Terengganu, assessing the inclusivity of school facilities is crucial for understanding the extent to which these environments support the educational needs of PWDs. The data shows that the number of PWDs in Malaysia in 2022 was 45,593 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024). And among 2,674 students were from State of Terengganu, while only 1,064 were the current research area (Besut District).

This study aims to evaluate the accessibility and usability of educational facilities in Besut, Terengganu schools, focusing on how well they meet the needs of PWDs. By examining the current state of facilities and gathering insights from stakeholders, this research seeks to identify gaps and propose strategies for enhancing inclusivity,

ultimately contributing to a more equitable educational experience for all students. Enhancing inclusivity in education is also linked to broader societal benefits, as better education levels improve various aspects of life for PWDs. Proposed strategies to enhance inclusivity include enhanced job coaching, market-aligned training, and policies to encourage private sector support. Mazur and others (2011) and Rogana Jani (2020), added that, Higher education levels have been shown to improve various aspects of life for PWDs. However, challenges such as discrimination and inadequate facility accessibility continue to hinder progress. Further, Travis Bowen (2021) highlights the low education and employment rates among young PWDs, despite their aspirations for higher education. Additionally, Jean Hauf (2021) pointed out that limited local options for HEIs often force PWDs to seek opportunities outside their home states.

1.2 Problem Statement

The problem statement is the most crucial element in any research study. It provides a concise description that explores the issues or challenges related to the research topic. The root cause of the problem must be identified before any solutions or opinions are introduced. Singh, S. (2023) states that a problem should be able to stimulate theory, practice, policy, or understanding of a particular situation. It should be relevant to the field of study, addressing practical concerns or significant theoretical dilemmas. All factors related to the challenges faced by PWDs are considered. It is believed that inadequate facilities are one of the reasons for the decline in the number of PWDs registered in schools in Malaysia. However, this situation cannot be fully understood until the findings of the study on this issue are released. The Interaction with Disabled Persons (IDP) Scale by Gething is used as a tool for data collection (Iacono et al., 2009). The respondents consist of PWDs and teachers who teach PWDs in the Besut District. Smith and Johnson (2023) have stated that the difficulties faced by PWDs encompass various challenges and barriers that hinder their full participation in academic activities, including physical accessibility limitations, lack of support services, social stigma, financial constraints, and insufficient awareness and training regarding disability rights and accommodations.

Therefore, this research is designed to identify the types of problems related to facilities in schools and the needs of PWDs in Malaysia, which will be thoroughly investigated. All issues will be comprehensively examined to find the obstacles that prevent them from continuing their education. Accurate assessments regarding the effectiveness of efforts made and their impact help uncover the real problems. A comprehensive examination from the grassroots level is capable of understanding the true state of affairs.

1.3 Significant of Study

Othman and others (2022) stated that creating special laws alone is insufficient to fully protect the educational rights of PWDs. While legislation provides a framework for inclusion, challenges persist within the Special Education Programmed (SEP), including a lack of human capital and inadequate facilities. Creating special laws alone is insufficient to fully protect the educational rights of PWDs. While legislation provides a framework for inclusion, challenges persist within the SEP, including a lack of human capital and inadequate facilities. These shortcomings hinder PWDs from enjoying and accessing fair and equal educational opportunities comparable to those available to children without disabilities. Most prioritize compliance with building laws rather than the real user-friendly conditions for PWDs at the higher education level. Therefore, a specific guideline, using Community Colleges as an example, is provided so that relevant parties can meet the needs as illustrated in the example. Researchers believe that in-depth studies for schools are also necessary because schools are the foundation of students' education. Respondents from a district in Terengganu were taken as an example for approaching this issue. To achieve the best results, this study was designed to demonstrate the significance of PWDs convenience factors on the enrollment statistics of PWDs in schools around the Besut District.

In addition, this research is hoped to serve as a reference for advancing the education sector. Improvements in facilities for PWDs are expected to become a key issue discussed by policymakers, including the government, so that the slow increase in the number of PWDs can rise dramatically. The Department of Social Welfare Malaysia is also expected to benefit from this study. It is hoped that improvements will occur and that the isolated issues raised can be addressed seriously.

1.4 Research Objectives

The specific research objectives are to evaluate the adequacy of educational facilities and resources for PWDs assessing their accessibility, usability, and impact on learning outcomes. Secondly, to identify and analyze other facility-related issues affecting PWDs, including unrecognized barriers, while assessing the alignment of existing facilities with universal design principles and policies.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions are focused on the how adequate are the educational facilities and resources for PWDs in terms of accessibility, usability, and their impact on learning outcomes. What unrecognized facility-related barriers affect PWDs, and to what extent do existing facilities align with UDP and policies to ensure accessibility, usability, and inclusivity?

2 Methods

2.1 Description of the Study Area

The Besut district in Terengganu serves as the specific location for this study, which focuses on PWDs. With its rural landscape, Besut provides a unique backdrop for understanding the educational challenges faced by PWDs in an isolated environment. This setting allows for the exploration of issues such as community integration and accessibility to educational institutions. The study includes PWDs aged between 10 and 18 who are enrolled in primary and secondary schools. By examining these age and location-specific aspects, the study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of inclusive education practices and policies. This will provide insight into the diverse needs and experiences of PWDs in various contexts, as informed by universal design principles, ultimately guiding strategies to effectively address these challenges.

2.2 Research Design and Approach

This study employed a quantitative methods research design for a comprehensive understanding of the inclusivity of facilities for PWDs in Besut, Terengganu schools. The quantitative component assessed the accessibility and usability of facilities through structured questionnaires administered to 281 students with disabilities aged 10 to 18 years from special education schools in Besut, Terengganu, who were active OKU cardholders. This gathered data on facility accessibility, support received, and perceptions of the school environment, which were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The quantitative findings provided a broad overview of facility accessibility and five direct questionnaires were used for quantitative data collection.

2.3 Ethical Consideration

The current study follows the standard procedure of Human Participants Research at Faculty Islamic Contemporary Studies, and also availed ethical approval from the Research Ethical Commission situated at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Malaysia.

2.4 Population, Sample and sampling technique

The data shows that the number of PWDs in Malaysia in 2022 was 45,593. Of this total, 2,674 students were from Terengganu, and 1,064 students were from the Besut District. The Krejcie and Morgan formula (1970) is used to determine the sample size and population with a confidence level of 95% (0.95). However, the estimate minimum sample size required for a population of 1,064 is approximately 281 respondents. The table 1 shows the population of PWDs and the type of disabilities, and the majority of have learning disabilities (895 *f* / 77%). Which is alarming situation, because the learning is one of the crucial disabilities which have impacted all others.

Table 1. The population of PWDs

Disability Type	Number	Percentage (%)
Hearing Disability	31	2.67
Visually Disabled	14	1.21
Speech Disability	93	8.01
Physical Disability	67	5.77
Learning Disabilities	895	77.01
Multiple Disabilities	54	4.65
TOTAL	1064	100.00

Source: Raw source from Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah Besut

3 RESULT

This section of the study shows the results and it is presented in tables. The data provided regarding facilities for PWDs in school and their perceived needs:

Table 2. Socio-demographic profile of the participants

Age Group	Percentage	Type of Disability	Percentage
8 years old	6.6%	Mobility impairment	3.3%
9 years old	20%	Visual impairment	3.3%
10 years old	16.7%	Hearing impairment	26.7%
11 years old	6.7%	Learning disability	60%
12 years old	13.3%	Intellectual disability	3.3%

Age Group	Percentage	Type of Disability	Percentage
13 years old	23.3%	Mental health condition	3.3%
16 years old	3.3%	Chronic illness	3.3%
18 years old	6.6%	Other	3.3%

Source: Primary data

Table 2 provides a detailed breakdown of the respondents based on two key variables: age group distribution and type of disability. The table combines these variables to present a comprehensive overview of the demographic characteristics of the population studied.

Hypothesis 1 (Ho1)

Table 3 Satisfaction Levels Regarding Facilities for PWDs

Response	Description	Percentage
Strongly Agree	High satisfaction with facilities, indicating strong support for PWDs students.	40%
Agree	Positive perception of adequacy in facilities provided for PWDs students.	43.3%
Disagree	Dissatisfaction, highlighting areas needing improvement in facilities.	13.3%
Strongly Disagree	Significant dissatisfaction with current provisions for PWDs students.	3.4%

Source: Primary data

Table 3 shows the data regarding the facilities for PWDs in school reveals a generally positive perception among respondents. A significant majority, comprising 83.3% of respondents, believe that the facilities are adequate, with 43.3% agreeing and 40% strongly agreeing. This indicates a high level of satisfaction with the current provisions, suggesting that the school is doing well in supporting PWDs. However, there is still room for improvement, as 16.7% of respondents express some level of dissatisfaction, with 13.3% disagreeing and 3.4% strongly disagreeing.

Hypothesis 2 (Ho2)

Table 4 Accessibility of Resources and Facilities for PWDs

Response	Description	Percentage
Strongly Agree	High satisfaction with accessibility, indicating significant efforts by the school.	50%
Agree	Positive perception of resource accessibility.	43.3%
Disagree	Low dissatisfaction, highlighting minor areas for improvement.	6.7%
Strongly Disagree	No respondents expressed strong disagreement, reflecting effective strategies.	0%

Source: Primary data

Table 4 shows the accessibility of resources and facilities for PWDs at their school is perceived very positively by respondents. A substantial majority, consisting of 93.3% of respondents, believed that these resources were easily accessible. This is divided between those who "Agree" (43.3%) and those who "Strongly Agree" (50%), indicating a high level of satisfaction with the ease of access to these facilities. The strong agreement from half of the respondents suggests that the school has made significant efforts to ensure that PWDs can readily access the resources they need. Furthermore, the low level of dissatisfaction is notable, with only 6.7% of respondents disagreeing and no one strongly disagreeing. This absence of strong disagreement underscores the effectiveness of the school's strategies for making these resources accessible.

Hypothesis 3 (Ho3)

Table 5 Perception of Existing Facilities' Impact on Learning Experiences

Response	Description	Percentage
Strongly Agree	Facilities significantly enhance learning experiences.	30.0%
Agree	Positive impact of facilities on students' learning experiences.	63.3%
Disagree	Minor dissatisfaction with the facilities' impact on learning.	6.7%
Strongly Disagree	No respondents expressed strong disagreement.	0%

Source: Primary data

Table 5 shows the existing facilities in the school are perceived as having a positive impact on students' learning experiences. A significant majority of respondents, 63.3%, agreed with this statement, while 30.0% strongly agreed, indicating a strong conviction in the facilities' benefits. Only a small minority, 6.7%, disagreed, and no respondents strongly disagreed. This overall positive perception suggests that the school's facilities are generally well-regarded and contribute positively to the educational environment, with a combined 93.3% of respondents affirming their positive impact.

Hypothesis 4 (Ho4)

Table 6 Perception of Basic Software Facilities and Assistive Technologies' Impact on Learning

Facility/Technology	Description	Percentage
All of the Above	Comprehensive approach combining multiple facilities and technologies for enhanced learning.	23.3%
Ramps, Elevators, Accessible Classrooms	Emphasizes the importance of physical accessibility in creating an inclusive environment.	26.7%
Adjustable Chairs and Desks	Highlights the role of adaptable physical spaces in supporting students' needs.	20%
Induction Loop System and Hearing Assistance Devices	Indicates the value of assistive listening technologies for some students.	13.3%
Specialized Educational Software	Reflects the importance of tailored digital tools for individual learning needs.	16.7%
Tailored Learning Tools	Shows the benefit of customized tools designed to meet specific educational requirements.	16.7%

Source: Primary data

The above table (6) shows the existing basic software facilities and other assistive technologies in their school are perceived as having a positive impact on the learning experience, but the responses highlight a variety of perspectives on what contributes most significantly to this impact. The most commonly selected option, "All of the above," was chosen by 23.3% of respondents, indicating that a significant portion of respondents believe that a comprehensive approach, including various types of facilities and technologies, is essential for enhancing learning. Among specific facilities, "Ramps, elevators, accessible classrooms" were noted by 26.7% of respondents as contributing positively to their learning experience. This highlights the importance of physical accessibility in creating an inclusive environment. "Equipped with tools like adjustable chairs and desks" was mentioned by 20% of respondents, showing that adaptable physical spaces also play a crucial role in supporting students' needs. Technologies like the "Induction loop system and hearing assistance devices" were noted by 13.3% of respondents, indicating that assistive listening technologies are valued by some students. Additionally, "Specialized educational software" and "Tailored learning tools" each received 16.7% of the responses, suggesting that digital tools tailored to individual needs are also seen as beneficial.

Hypothesis 5 (Ho5)

Table 7: Spaces Needing Improvement in Schools for PWDs

Space	Description	Percentage
Classrooms	Fundamental learning spaces needing modifications like adaptable seating and accessible materials.	33.3%
Playgrounds/Fields	Essential for physical education and social interaction, requiring accessible equipment and pathways.	33.3%
Libraries	Spaces for learning resources that need enhancements for inclusivity.	16.7%
Corridors	Areas requiring improved accessibility for smooth navigation.	10%
Other Spaces	Miscellaneous areas identified as needing improvements.	10%
Restrooms	Facilities requiring accessibility upgrades, such as grab bars and wider stalls.	3.35%
Canteens	Dining spaces needing adjustments for better accessibility and usability.	3.35%
Laboratories	Science and technology spaces requiring modifications to accommodate PWDs.	3.35%

Source: Primary data

Table 7 shows the most needed improvement spaces in school to ensure that facilities for PWDs are more comprehensive are primarily focused on two areas: classrooms and playgrounds/fields. Both of these areas were identified by 33.3% of respondents, indicating a strong need for enhancements in these spaces. This suggests that respondents believe that making these areas more accessible and supportive is crucial for providing a comprehensive environment for PWDs. Classrooms are fundamental learning spaces, and improving them to better accommodate PWDs could involve modifications such as adaptable seating, specialized educational technology, and accessible instructional materials. Similarly, playgrounds and fields are essential for physical education and social interaction, and enhancements here might include accessible play equipment, pathways, and facilities that allow all students to participate fully. Other areas identified for improvement include corridors (10%), libraries (16.7%), and "Other" spaces (10%), which could encompass a variety of facilities not listed. Restrooms, canteens, and laboratories were noted by a smaller percentage of respondents (3.35% each), indicating that while these areas are important, they are not seen as needing as much attention as classrooms and playgrounds/fields.

4 DISCUSSION

This study involves the assessment of PWDs regarding the adequacy of facilities at school. Data from H01 shows the majority agree that the facilities at the school are satisfactory. However, a small number of students are dissatisfied with the condition of the facilities at their school. The study findings reveal that facilities PWDs in every building, especially in universities, are still inadequate (Chan et al., 2022).

The data from H02 shows that the majority of students strongly agree that their special needs, such as physical infrastructure and digital technology, are well provided for. However, a small group expressed disagreement, which indicates that the physical access and digital technology provided still need improvement. The study by Ahmad and others (2023) highlights that assistive technology is one of the most critical challenges facing inclusive education practices for students with disabilities at X University in Jordan.

The survey from H03 shows that the majority of students agree that the facilities at the school positively impact their learning process and achievements. A minority disagreed, but no one strongly disagreed with this idea. Ghazali and colleagues (2024) emphasize that the success of PWDs in HEIs depends on the availability of comprehensive support services and accommodations tailored to their individual needs, irrespective of the type of institution.

The data from H04 shows that respondents agree that facilities such as ramps, elevators, and easily accessible pathways have a positive effect on their learning. Some also noted that adjustable chairs, specialized software, and learning tools positively impact them. The induction loop and hearing devices were considered minor items, but still need attention. Many also agree that all these aspects contribute to their learning experience. Li (2025) stated in his study that the process of integrating physical and digital accessibility, a holistic approach must be adopted. This includes improving outdated buildings by adding ramps, elevators, and wider pathways. Lecture halls also need to be equipped with furniture that is suitable for accessibility. On the digital front, inclusive designs such as screen readers, text-to-speech tools, and video captions are essential to ensure the participation of PWDs in academic activities.

The data from H05 shows that students have expressed opinions about the need for improvements in certain spaces. Among the most important areas are the classrooms and playgrounds. Facilities in libraries, corridors, and any spaces that they use should also be given attention. Furthermore, the majority agree that facilities such as toilets, canteens, and laboratories still need improvement. Shahrul Anuar et al. (2023), in their studies at the University of Malaya, emphasize the need for improved facilities, including accessible lecture halls, restrooms, and recreational areas.

5 CONCLUSION

The present study discussed the PWDs cases and impact of facilities on their learning. The majority are satisfied with the facilities provided at schools, but there are several aspects that may have been overlooked and need improvement to ensure a smooth learning process. Among the areas that require enhancement are physical infrastructure in specific spaces and digital technologies such as Braille software. Classrooms and playground areas are among those identified as needing improvement. This study successfully uncovered the genuine opinions of PWDs facility users in a transparent manner. This demonstrates that the government considers PWDs facility issues as ongoing concerns that still need improvement through user feedback and evaluations. This also means that the concept of UDP has been maximally realized, although attention still needs to be given to the details. Input from teachers and management is necessary so that facility-related problems can be heard in more detail. Therefore, the reduction in registered students in Malaysia is not solely due to the lack of comprehensive facilities but possibly due to other factors that still need to be studied.

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