

## Correlation of Inclusive Communication Strategy with the Formation of Teacher Role Identity in State Special Needs Schools in Gorontalo City

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### Abstract

*Inclusive education requires teachers to implement effective communication strategies in the learning process for students with special needs. Inclusive communication strategies are a crucial factor in supporting the teachers' role identity formation as educators in an inclusive educational environment. This study aimed to find the correlation between inclusive communication strategies and the teachers' role identity formation in a State Special School in Gorontalo City. This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational method. Data collection through questionnaires was conducted with 43 respondents, teachers at the State Special School in Gorontalo City. Data analysis was conducted using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation test and the coefficient of determination test in SPSS. The findings showed a strong and significant relationship between inclusive communication strategies and teachers' role identity formation in a State Special School in Gorontalo City. It was evidenced by the correlation coefficient of 0.703 in the strong category and a significance value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ . The coefficient of determination indicated an R-square of 0.494, meaning that inclusive communication strategies contributed 49.4% to teachers' role identity formation. Factors outside the study influenced the remaining 50.6%. It means that the better the inclusive communication strategies implemented by teachers, the better the teachers' role identity formation in the context of inclusive education.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is an approach that emphasizes the rights of all children, including those with disabilities, to have the opportunity to learn in an environment that is equal to other children. The Indonesian government has affirmed this commitment through Minister of National Education Regulation Number 70 of 2009 concerning Inclusive Education for students with special needs, but who possess extraordinary intelligence and talents. Currently, 49% of special needs schools (SLB) are still concentrated on the island of Java, which leaves rural areas and the 3T (Underdeveloped, Remote, and Outermost) regions significantly behind in access to education for people with disabilities. Data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdikbudristek) in 2023 stated that Indonesia is experiencing a shortage of special schools and special education staff (Pandito & Diva, 2024). This indicates that despite existing policies, the implementation of inclusive education still faces various structural and cultural obstacles.

Teachers in special needs schools (SLB) play a crucial role. They serve not only as instructors but also as communicators, motivators, and social-emotional mentors for students with special needs (Marpaung, T. P., & Putra, D. P., 2022; Annaurotin, L., &

Harsiwi, N. E., 2024). This strategic role requires teachers to possess strong communication skills, empathy, and creativity in conveying learning messages so that they can be understood by all students (Melia, Ramania, & M. Sibli, Y., 2025), including those with cognitive, emotional, or sensory disabilities. Therefore, teachers' ability to adapt communicatively is a crucial aspect of the success of inclusive education. Teachers can help all students build the confidence and skills they need to face the challenges of today's world. It's about ensuring every student feels empowered and prepared for what lies ahead (Wulandari, A., Safitri, & Farhurohman, O., 2024).

In practice, communication between teachers and students with special needs often faces significant barriers (Fransisca, M., Herlina, H., & Wardany, O. F., 2023). These barriers can include limited verbal language, differences in perception, sensory impairments, or a lack of sensitivity to the child's nonverbal expressions. These barriers have the potential to reduce the effectiveness of the learning process and lead to misunderstandings that impact the student's emotional well-being.

An inclusive communication strategy is a systematic effort by teachers to adapt messages, media, and communication styles to the diverse needs and abilities of students. The use of inclusive communication is increasingly recognized as a best practice and an effective use of speech and language therapy services (Money, D., 2021). Teachers play a key role in implementing inclusive language, demonstrating the importance of inclusive communication in learning practices (Hayati M., 2026). This approach includes the use of simple language, visual gestures, and the use of assistive communication technology. The goal is not simply to convey information, but to build mutual understanding, acceptance, and trust in the teacher-student relationship. In the context of inclusive education, inclusive communication supports the creation of the principle of equity because all students are given equal learning opportunities, complete with accommodations specifically designed to meet their different needs (Dhika Nurianti Jambak, D. & Mardella Arbani, E., 2025).

The selection of the State Special Needs School (SLB) in Gorontalo City as the research location is based on its role as a reference school with heterogeneous student characteristics, thus presenting unique and complex communication dynamics. Unlike public schools that have relatively homogeneous communication patterns, SLB requires teachers to implement inclusive communication strategies more intensively and reflectively. Therefore, this research is relevant and significant in examining the correlation between inclusive communication strategies and the formation of teacher role identities in the context of special education at the State Special Needs School in Gorontalo City.

This research has both academic and practical urgency. Academically, this research will enrich the body of communication studies, particularly in the context of inclusive education in Indonesia. Practically, the results of this study are expected to form the basis for developing communication strategy training for special needs teachers (SLB) and strengthening their capacity as professional inclusive educators. All of this leads to inclusive education policies prioritizing ethical role models as a core competency to ensure sustainable, culturally rooted inclusive school transformation. Sulastri, Nur Sasongko, R., & Kristiawan, M., 2026). Thus, this research is expected to provide a real contribution to improving the quality of communication in special education environments.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

Based on the background of the problem described, the object of this research is the correlation between Strategy Inclusive Communication (X) with the Formation of Teacher Role Identity (Y) in State Special Needs Schools in Gorontalo City. This research was conducted for 6 months, namely November 2025 – May 2026. In this study, the

researcher used a quantitative approach with a correlational study design. correlational, because it aims to test the existence of a relationship or correlation between two variables, namely the correlation of Inclusive Communication Strategy (X) with the Formation of Gu Role Identityru (Y) di State Special Needs School in Gorontalo City. According to Sugiyono (2024), the quantitative method was chosen in this research because the data collected are in the form of numbers that can be analyzed statistically. thesek sehi the results cannot be generalized to a specific population.

The X variable of this study is an inclusive communication strategy with dimensions of the use of verbal symbols, nonverbal symbols, adaptation of communication media, and interpretation of student responses. Indicators for the use of verbal symbols consist of teachers using simple language that is easy for students to understand, teachers adjusting word choice according to students' abilities, and teachers providing re-explanations when students do not understand the message. Indicators for the use of nonverbal symbols consist of teachers using body gestures to clarify messages, teachers showing facial expressions that support communication, and teachers using eye contact and visual cues in interactions. Indicators for adaptation of communication media consist of teachers using visual media according to students' needs, teachers utilizing communication aids, and teachers adjusting delivery methods based on students' responses. The last indicator is interpretation of student responses, consisting of teachers paying attention to students' verbal and nonverbal responses, teachers interpreting the meaning of students' responses, and teachers adjusting communication strategies based on students' feedback.

The Y variable of this study is the formation of the role identity of teachers in the State Special Needs School of Gorontalo City, with the dimension of self-understanding of the role (*Self-Understanding*), commitment to the profession (*professional commitment*), and social practices and professional interactions (*professional practice and interaction*). For the dimension of self-understanding of the role, the indicators are that teachers understand their professional responsibilities as educators in SLB, teachers have confidence in their competence in teaching students with special needs, and teachers can reflect on the learning practices that have been carried out. For commitment to the profession, the indicators consist of teachers showing dedication in supporting the academic and social development of students, teachers having consistency in carrying out their duties as inclusive educators, and teachers being willing to develop themselves to improve the quality of learning. The last dimension is social practice and professional interaction, consisting of indicators of teachers actively building positive communication with students, teachers collaborating with colleagues in supporting inclusive learning, and teachers showing professionalism in interactions in the school environment.

This study used a quantitative approach with a questionnaire as the data collection instrument. The distributed questionnaire consisted of 21 statements, including 12 items to measure inclusive communication strategies (variable X) and 9 items to measure teacher role identity formation (variable Y). This study aimed to be generalizable, thus requiring a representative sample of the entire population, operationalization of concepts, and measuring instruments to ensure that the research instruments used were accurate and reliable. Validity and reliability tests were conducted (Rachmat Kriyantono, 2021). In this study, the population was all 43 active teachers at the State Special Needs School (SLB) in Gorontalo City. This study used a total sampling technique (Sugiyono and Puji Lestari, 2021). The sample in this study consisted of 43 respondents. In conducting the *test*, each research variable will be measured using a Likert Scale. The questionnaire will be prepared with five options, namely strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). Based on the source, the data is divided into two, namely primary data and

secondary data, and the data collection techniques are questionnaires, observation, interviews, and documentation.

According to Sujarweni (2008) in Hayatun (2023), a validity test is a tool used to determine the appropriateness of items in a questionnaire in defining a variable. This questionnaire generally supports a specific group of variables. If the calculated r value is greater than the table r value, the questionnaire is declared valid; if the calculated r value is less than the table r value, the questionnaire is declared invalid.

For interval measurement scales, validity testing is performed using the Pearson Product Moment correlation formula. According to Sugiyono (2021), the guidelines for interpreting correlation coefficients are as follows.

**Table 1** Interpretation of Correlation Coefficient

| Coefficient Interval | Relationship Level |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 0,00 – 0,199         | Very Low           |
| 0,20 – 0,399         | Low                |
| 0,40 – 0,599         | Currently          |
| 0,60 – 0,799         | Strong             |
| 0,80 – 1,000         | Very strong        |

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gorontalo City State Special School is a special education institution located in Gorontalo City. The school was founded on June 27, 2007, with Establishment Decree Number 723 under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture. This school is located on Jl. Beringin, Tuladenggi Village, Duingingi District, Gorontalo City, Gorontalo Province. Gorontalo City State Special School has been accredited A. In learning activities, this school, which has 256 students, is guided by 55 professional teachers in their fields.

This school has a total of 256 students consisting of 143 boys and 113 girls, where the number of boys outnumbers girls. As a special education institution, SLB Negeri Kota Gorontalo provides educational services for children with special needs (ABK) with various types of needs, namely blindness, deafness, mental retardation, and other special needs. Educational services at this school cover the Elementary School (SD), Junior High School (SMP), and Senior High School (SMA) levels, thus providing continuous learning opportunities for students.

#### 3.1. Research Results

The validity testing of the questionnaire in this study was conducted by calculating the correlation coefficient value between the score of each statement item and the total score of the variable at a significance level of 5% ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The measurement scale used was the Likert scale, so the method used in the validity test was the product-moment correlation. The testing criteria state that a statement item is declared valid if the calculated r-value is greater than the r-table. With a sample size (N) of 43 respondents and a significance level of 5%, the r-table value obtained was 0.301.

**Table 2.** Validity Test of Inclusive Communication Strategy (X)

| No | r-table<br>(0.301) | r-count | Information |
|----|--------------------|---------|-------------|
| X1 | 0,301              | 0,567   | Valid       |
| X2 | 0,301              | 0,738   | Valid       |

|     |       |       |       |
|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| X3  | 0,301 | 0,408 | Valid |
| X4  | 0,301 | 0,519 | Valid |
| X5  | 0,301 | 0,490 | Valid |
| X6  | 0,301 | 0,683 | Valid |
| X7  | 0,301 | 0,591 | Valid |
| X8  | 0,301 | 0,688 | Valid |
| X9  | 0,301 | 0,474 | Valid |
| X10 | 0,301 | 0,632 | Valid |
| X11 | 0,301 | 0,395 | Valid |
| X12 | 0,301 | 0,465 | Valid |

Source: SPSS Data Processing 27, 2026

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that all statement items in the inclusive communication strategy variable (X1 to X12) have a calculated r-value greater than the r-table value of 0.301. The calculated r-values obtained ranged from 0.395 to 0.738, which indicates that each item has a relationship that has an adequate level of correlation with the total score of the variable. This indicates that each statement item can measure the construct of inclusive communication strategy accurately.

**Table 3.** Validity Test of Teacher Role Identity Formation (Y)

| No | r-table<br>(0.301) | r-count | Information |
|----|--------------------|---------|-------------|
| Y1 | 0,301              | 0,700   | Valid       |
| Y2 | 0,301              | 0,714   | Valid       |
| Y3 | 0,301              | 0,727   | Valid       |
| Y4 | 0,301              | 0,489   | Valid       |
| Y5 | 0,301              | 0,567   | Valid       |
| Y6 | 0,301              | 0,618   | Valid       |
| Y7 | 0,301              | 0,570   | Valid       |
| Y8 | 0,301              | 0,314   | Valid       |
| Y9 | 0,301              | 0,698   | Valid       |

Source: SPSS Data Processing 27, 2026

Based on Table 3, all items in the teacher role identity formation variable (Y1 to Y9) also showed a calculated r-value greater than the r-table (0.301). The calculated r-value ranged from 0.314 to 0.727, indicating that each item had an adequate level of correlation with the total score of the variable. Although there was one item with a relatively low value (Y8 = 0.314), this value remained above the minimum r-table limit, so it could still be declared valid. Thus, it can be concluded that all statement items in both variables, both inclusive communication strategies and teacher role identity formation, have met the validity criteria and are suitable for use as measuring instruments in this study.

After the validity test, the next step is the reliability test. The purpose of the reliability test is to determine the degree to which the research instrument consistently measures a variable. A reliable instrument will produce relatively consistent results when used under similar conditions. In this study, the reliability test was conducted using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient in SPSS. The criterion used is that a variable is considered reliable if its Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than 0.60.

**Table 4** Reliability Test of Inclusive Communication Strategy (X)

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items (number of questions) | Reliability Value |
|------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 0,789            | 12                               | 0,60              |

Source: SPSS Data Processing 27, 2026

Based on Table 4, it is known that the inclusive communication strategy variable (X) has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.789 with a total of 12 statement items. This value is greater than the minimum limit of 0.60 ( $0.789 > 0.60$ ), so it can be concluded that the instrument for this variable has a good level of reliability. The alpha value approaching 0.80 indicates that the level of internal consistency between items in this variable is relatively strong. This means that each statement item has a good relationship in measuring the overall concept of inclusive communication strategy. Thus, this instrument is reliable for use in research data collection.

**Table 5.** Reliability Test of Teacher Role Identity Formation (Y)

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items (number of questions) | Reliability Value |
|------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 0,771            | 9                                | 0,60              |

Source: SPSS Data Processing 27, 2026

Based on Table 5, the teacher role identity formation variable (Y) has a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.771 with a total of 9 items. This value is also greater than 0.60 ( $0.771 > 0.60$ ), so it can be concluded that this variable is reliable. The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.771 indicates that the instrument has a good level of consistency in measuring teacher role identity formation. This means that all items in the variable are able to work together to measure the same construct stably and consistently.

Overall, the reliability test results indicate that both variables in this study have reliable instruments. Therefore, the questionnaire used is not only valid but also reliable, making it suitable for further analysis at the hypothesis testing stage.

Hypothesis testing in this study was conducted to determine whether there is a relationship between the inclusive communication strategy variable (X) and the formation of teacher role identity (Y). The analysis was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment correlation test with the help of SPSS version 27.

**Table 6.** Product Moment Correlation Test Results (Pearson)

| Variables  | Correlation Coefficient (R) | Sig. (2-tailed) | N  |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------|----|
| Inclusive Communication Strategy (X)<br>Formation of Teacher Role Identity (Y) | 0,703                       | 0,000           | 43 |

Source: SPSS Data Processing 27, 2026

The correlation coefficient (R) value of 0.703 in Table 6 indicates that the relationship between inclusive communication strategies and the formation of teacher role identity is in the strong category. In the interpretation of the product-moment correlation coefficient, the value range of 0.60–0.799 is included in the strong relationship category, so it can be understood that the relationship between the two variables in this study is quite strong. This indicates that inclusive communication strategies play a close role in supporting the formation of teacher role identity, which indicates a strong relationship between inclusive communication strategies and the formation of teacher role identity.

A significance value (Sig.) of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicates that the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant. This means that the relationship found in this study did not occur by chance, but rather truly reflects the conditions in the field. Thus, it can be stated that there is a real relationship between inclusive communication strategies and the formation of teacher role identities in SLB Negeri Kota Gorontalo. Therefore, these results can be used as a basis for drawing research conclusions.

The correlation coefficient of 0.703 indicates a positive relationship, as the R value is greater than zero ( $R > 0$ ). This indicates a unidirectional relationship between inclusive communication strategies and teacher role identity formation. The impact of this positive relationship is that the better or higher the implementation of inclusive communication strategies, the greater the development of teacher role identity. Conversely, if inclusive communication strategies decline, the development of teacher role identity also tends to decline. This condition indicates that both variables have a mutually supportive relationship in the context of inclusive education practices.

This suggests that teachers' ability to implement inclusive communication, such as using simple language, nonverbal communication, and adapting to students' needs, is closely related to how they understand, implement, and internalize their role as educators in inclusive educational environments. This finding aligns with previous research that suggests effective communication in inclusive learning plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' professionalism and role identity in carrying out their duties.

The results of this study indicate that inclusive communication strategies not only serve as a means of conveying information in learning, but also play a role in shaping how teachers understand and carry out their roles professionally. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient value of 0.703 can be interpreted as 70.3%. This value indicates that the relationship between inclusive communication strategies and the formation of teacher role identity is at a strong level. This percentage illustrates that inclusive communication strategies have a fairly high correlation in supporting the formation of teacher role identity in SLB Negeri Kota Gorontalo. Thus, the better the implementation of inclusive communication by teachers, the better the formation of teacher role identity in carrying out their duties and roles as educators in an inclusive educational environment.

### **3.2. Discussion**

The results of the study indicate a strong and significant relationship between inclusive communication strategies and the formation of teacher role identity in a State Special Needs School in Gorontalo City. This is evidenced by a correlation coefficient of 0.703, which is in the strong category, and a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. These findings indicate a statistically strong and consistent relationship between the implementation of inclusive communication strategies by teachers and the formation of teacher role identity in the context of inclusive education.

Furthermore, the coefficient of determination of 0.494 indicates that inclusive communication strategies can explain 49.4% of the variation in teacher role identity formation, while the remaining 50.6% is influenced by factors outside this study. This value is considered quite large in social research, thus indicating that inclusive communication strategies are an important factor in teacher role identity formation.

Conceptually, an inclusive communication strategy is a teacher's ability to effectively convey learning messages while considering the needs, characteristics, and abilities of students with special needs. This communication encompasses not only verbal aspects but also nonverbal aspects, the use of learning media, and the ability to

understand student responses during the learning process. In the context of inclusive education, communication is a crucial element because it serves as the primary link between teachers and students with diverse backgrounds and needs. This demonstrates that the quality of communication implemented by teachers not only impacts student understanding but also contributes to shaping teachers' perspectives on their role as educators.

Meanwhile, the formation of a teacher's role identity is a process of internalizing values, understanding, and professional commitment that develops through teaching experience, social interactions, and reflection on learning practices. This identity is not formed instantly, but rather through an ongoing process influenced by teachers' direct experiences in various learning situations, particularly in inclusive education environments.

The results of this study indicate that teachers' communication practices are closely related to how they understand and carry out their roles. In inclusive learning, teachers are required to adapt to various student situations, ensuring that their communication is not rigid but flexible and responsive. This ensures that communication serves not only as a means of conveying material but also as part of the process of developing teacher professionalism, where communication becomes a reflective process that helps teachers construct meaning within their professional roles.

Through intensive interactions with students, such as the use of simple language, nonverbal expressions, and the ability to understand students' needs and responses, teachers continuously build professional experiences that strengthen their identity. This process encourages teachers to continually adapt, improve their competencies, and deepen their understanding of their roles. Thus, communication plays a crucial role in the process of shaping a teacher's professional identity.

Furthermore, in special education settings, the relationship between teachers and students tends to be closer and more intense. This closeness strengthens the internalization of professional values, enabling teachers to not only carry out their teaching duties but also build emotional and social engagement with students. This ultimately contributes to strengthening teachers' identity as educators in the context of inclusive education.

However, despite the significant contribution of inclusive communication strategies, the study also shows that the formation of teacher role identity is not solely influenced by a single factor. Various other factors also play a role, as reflected in the 50.6% unexplained variation in this study, such as teaching experience, professional training, work environment, institutional support, and individual teacher motivation. This suggests that the formation of teacher role identity is a complex process influenced by various interrelated aspects.

Thus, it can be emphasized that inclusive communication strategies play a crucial role in shaping teachers' role identity, particularly in the context of inclusive education, which demands adaptive and reflective interactions. The more effective communication is applied in learning, the stronger the teachers' understanding, commitment, and professional practice in carrying out their roles as educators in inclusive educational environments. This emphasizes that inclusive communication not only functions as a learning technique but also as a foundation in shaping teachers' professional identity in inclusive educational environments.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the data analysis and discussion presented, it can be concluded that there is a strong and significant relationship between inclusive communication strategies and teacher role identity in SLB Negeri Kota Gorontalo. Inclusive communication strategies implemented by teachers in the learning process can support the formation of a better teacher role identity in the context of inclusive education. Through the ongoing communication process in learning interactions, teachers construct meaning, understanding, and reflection on their roles, which ultimately contribute to strengthening their professional identity in the context of inclusive education. The better the inclusive communication strategies implemented, the better the formation of teacher role identity. Thus, inclusive communication strategies have a significant relationship in supporting the formation of teacher role identity in SLB Negeri Kota Gorontalo.

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