

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

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Abstract

Introduction, Inclusive education requires schools to offer facilities that are accessible, usable, and supportive so that students with disabilities (SWD) can take part fully in learning. Malaysia has introduced initiatives to strengthen inclusive education, yet concerns persist about the adequacy of physical infrastructure, assistive technologies, learning resources, and other school facilities. Focusing on schools in Besut, Terengganu, this study assessed how well existing facilities meet the educational needs of SWD and reflect universal design principles. The study evaluated the adequacy, accessibility, and usability of the educational facilities and resources provided for students with disabilities in Besut, Terengganu. It examined how these facilities were perceived to affect students' learning experiences and identified areas needing improvement. The study also assessed how far current provisions support inclusive education and universal design principles. As for the **Methods**, a quantitative research design was employed. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire given to 281 SWD, aged between 10 and 18 years, who attended schools in Besut and were registered as active OKU cardholders with the Department of Social Welfare Malaysia. The participants came from several disability categories: hearing, visual, speech, physical, learning, and multiple disabilities. Descriptive statistics were used to examine their views on facility adequacy, accessibility, the impact on learning, assistive technologies, and areas that needed improvement. Ethical approval was secured through the relevant institutional research ethics procedures. The findings showed that SWD generally viewed their school facilities positively. Overall, 83.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the facilities provided were adequate, whereas 16.7% were dissatisfied. Regarding accessibility, 93.3% agreed or strongly agreed that the school's resources and facilities were accessible. Similarly, 93.3% of respondents said the existing facilities had positively affected their learning experiences. Ramps, elevators, accessible classrooms, adjustable furniture, specialized educational software, tailored learning tools, and hearing-assistance technologies were all seen as important to inclusive learning. Still, classrooms and playgrounds or sports fields were most often named as areas needing improvement, with each identified by 33.3% of respondents. Libraries, corridors, restrooms, canteens, laboratories, and other school spaces were also mentioned as concerns. This study concluded that school facilities in Besut, Terengganu, are generally viewed as supportive, accessible, and beneficial to SWD and their learning experiences. At the same time, the findings point to ongoing shortcomings in certain physical spaces, assistive technologies, and learning resources. Positive views of the facilities already in place should not be taken to mean that every accessibility requirement has been fully met. Further improvement depends on regular evaluation grounded in the actual experiences and needs of SWD. For **Recommendations**, schools and relevant authorities should give priority to improving classrooms and playgrounds. This includes adaptable furniture, accessible pathways, inclusive play equipment, and suitable learning materials. They believed that adapted materials such as Braille, audio, and screen-reader-compatible content enable SWD to learn and participate fully, advancing SDGs 3, 8, 10, and 11 by promoting inclusion, accessibility, employability, and well-being through universal design and accessible education facilities. Regular audits grounded in universal design principles can help identify physical and technological barriers. Teachers, school administrators, parents, and SWD should have a role in planning and assessing facility improvements. **Future research** should also involve teachers, school management, parents, and policymakers to develop a more complete understanding of facility-related challenges and how they relate to student enrollment and educational participation.

Keywords: students with disabilities, persons with disabilities, school facilities, inclusive education, accessibility, universal design,

Introduction

1.1 Background

Inclusive education seeks to give all students equal opportunities, regardless of ability or disability, and has become a central aim of modern education systems. Malaysia has pursued this aim through initiatives including the Program Pendidikan Inklusif (PPI) and the Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP), both implemented by the Ministry of Education. Yet schools do not always have the facilities or support needed to make inclusion effective for SWD. Inadequate facilities, limited resources, and low awareness of disability rights can all obstruct the integration of SWD into mainstream educational settings. Chan et al. (2022) likewise found that inclusive education for PKU remains far from being achieved. Against this backdrop, examining school facilities in Besut, Terengganu, can show how well these environments meet the educational needs of SWD. This study examines the accessibility and usability of educational facilities in schools in Besut, Terengganu, with particular attention to how effectively they serve SWD. It considers the present condition of these facilities alongside the perspectives of relevant stakeholders, seeking to identify existing gaps and suggest ways to make education more inclusive. The study is also connected to wider social benefits: higher levels of education have been shown to improve different aspects of life for SWD. Mazur and others (2011) and Rogana Jani (2020) added that higher education levels have this effect. Suggested measures include enhanced job coaching, training aligned with market needs, and policies that encourage support from the private sector. Still, discrimination and inadequate facility accessibility remain obstacles to further progress.

Travis Bowen (2021) also draws attention to the low rates of education and employment among young SWD, even though many aspire to pursue higher education. Jean Hauf (2021) notes that because local higher-education choices are limited, SWD often have to look beyond their home states for those opportunities.

1.2 Problem Statement

A clear problem statement anchors a research study. It briefly describes the issues or challenges surrounding the topic, but before proposing solutions or expressing opinions, the underlying cause must be established. Singh, S. (2023) states that a problem should stimulate theory, practice, policy, or understanding of a particular situation. It also needs to relate to the field of study by addressing practical concerns or meaningful theoretical dilemmas. In this case, the factors connected to the challenges faced by SWD are taken into account. Inadequate facilities are believed to be one reason for the decline in the number of SWD registered in schools in Malaysia. Still, the situation cannot be understood completely until the study's findings on this issue are released. Getting's Interaction with Disabled Persons (IDP) Scale serves as the data-collection tool. The respondents are SWD and teachers who teach SWD in the Besut District. According to Smith and Johnson (2023), SWD face a range of difficulties that can limit their full participation in academic activities: restricted physical accessibility, inadequate support services, social stigma, financial constraints, and insufficient awareness and training about disability rights and accommodations. Therefore, this research will identify school-facility problems and the needs of SWD in Malaysia through a detailed investigation. It will examine the obstacles that prevent them from continuing their education, while accurate assessments of existing efforts and their effects will help reveal the problems they actually face. Looking closely from the grassroots level can provide a clearer understanding of the situation.

1.3 Significant of Study

Othman and others (2022) argued that creating special laws alone is not enough to fully protect the educational rights of SWD. Although legislation establishes a framework for inclusion, problems remain within the Special Education Programmed (SEP), particularly the shortage of human capital and inadequate facilities. These

weaknesses limit SWD' ability to enjoy and access fair and equal educational opportunities comparable to those available to children without disabilities. At the higher education level, most prioritize compliance with building laws over creating conditions that are genuinely user-friendly for SWD. For this reason, a specific guideline is provided, using Community Colleges as an example, to help relevant parties meet the needs illustrated in the example. Researchers argue that schools also require in-depth study, since they form the foundation of students' education. For this research, respondents from a district in Terengganu were selected as an example for examining this issue. The study was designed to show how SWD convenience factors affect the enrollment statistics of SWD in schools throughout the Besut District. This research is also intended to serve as a reference for progress in the education sector. Policymakers, including the government, are expected to give greater attention to improving facilities for SWD, allowing the slow growth in the number of SWD to increase dramatically. The Department of Social Welfare Malaysia is expected to benefit from the findings as well. The study also hopes to encourage improvements and ensure that the isolated issues it raises are taken seriously.

1.4 Research Objectives

The following are the specific research purposes: To evaluate whether educational facilities and resources in Besut, Terengganu adequately meet the needs of SWD, with attention to their accessibility, usability, and effects on learning outcomes, while also examining the relationship between facility provision and SWD enrollment rates. To identify and examine other facility-related issues affecting SWD, including barriers that have gone unrecognized, and assess how closely existing facilities align with universal design principles and policies.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the study's objectives, several questions were formulated to guide this research.

- i)What ideas or solutions could give SWD opportunities to improve study and work environments through processes that make them more inclusive for everyone?
- ii)How adequate are the educational facilities and resources for SWD in Besut, Terengganu, regarding accessibility and usability, and how do they affect learning outcomes?
- iii)What correlation exists between the quality of these facilities and SWD enrollment rates?
- iv)What facility related barriers affecting SWD remain unrecognized, and to what extent do existing facilities comply with UDP and relevant policies to support accessibility, usability, and inclusivity?

2 Methods

2.1 Description of the Study

Area Besut district in Terengganu is the study site, with attention directed to SWD. Its rural setting offers a particular context for examining the educational difficulties SWD encounter in an isolated environment, including their integration into the community and access to educational institutions. The participants are SWD aged between 10 and 18 who attend primary and secondary schools. Focusing on this age group and location, the study seeks a more nuanced view of inclusive education practices and policies. It also offers insight into the varied needs and experiences of SWD across different contexts, drawing on universal design principles to guide strategies for addressing these challenges.

2.2 Research Design and Approach

This study used a quantitative research design to examine the inclusivity of facilities for students with disabilities in schools in Besut, Terengganu. Structured questionnaires assessed the accessibility and usability of these facilities among 281 SWD, aged 10 to 18 years, from special education schools in Besut, Terengganu; all were active OKU cardholders. The questionnaires collected information about facility accessibility, the support students received,

and their perceptions of the school environment. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, providing a broad view of facility accessibility. 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

Statistics indicate that Malaysia had 45,593 SWD in 2022. Terengganu accounted for 2,674 of them, including 1,064 students from the Besut District. To determine the population and sample size at a 95% (0.95) confidence level, this study uses the Krejcie and Morgan formula (1970). Based on that calculation, the estimated minimum sample size for a population of 1,064 is approximately 281 respondents.

Table 1. The population of SWD in Besut, Terenggau

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

Below is a summarized chart based on the data provided regarding facilities for SWD 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%
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%

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.

3.1 Hypothesis 1 (Ho1)

Table 3 Satisfaction Levels Regarding Facilities for SWD

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

Table 3 presents respondents' views on the facilities for SWD at the school. Overall, perceptions are positive: 83.3% consider the facilities adequate, including 43.3% who agree and 40% who strongly agree. This high level of satisfaction suggests that the school is providing effective support for SWD. Still, the findings point to some room for improvement. In total, 16.7% of respondents report dissatisfaction, with 13.3% disagreeing and 3.4% strongly disagreeing.

3.2 Hypothesis 2 (Ho2)

Table 4 Accessibility of Resources and Facilities for SWD

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%

Table 4 indicates that respondents view the accessibility of school resources and facilities for SWD very positively. In total, 93.3% believe these resources are easily accessible: 43.3% selected “Agree,” while 50% selected “Strongly Agree.” With half of the respondents expressing strong agreement, the findings suggest that the school has made significant efforts to ensure SWD can access the resources they require. Dissatisfaction was limited to 6.7% of respondents, and no one selected “Strongly Disagree.” That absence of strong disagreement points to the effectiveness of the school’s approach to making these resources accessible.

3.3 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%

Table 5 indicates that the school’s existing facilities are seen as improving students’ learning experiences. Agreement was high: 63.3% of respondents agreed and another 30.0% strongly agreed, showing firm confidence in the benefits of the facilities. Only 6.7% disagreed, while none strongly disagreed. Overall, 93.3% affirmed the facilities’ positive impact, suggesting that they are generally well regarded and support the educational environment.

3.4 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%

The above table (6) indicates that the basic software facilities and other assistive technologies available in your school are generally perceived to improve the learning experience. The responses, however, differ on which facilities make the greatest contribution. "Ramps, elevators, accessible classrooms" were identified by 26.7% of respondents, making physical accessibility the most frequently selected specific facility and underscoring its importance in an inclusive learning environment. "All of the above" was chosen by 23.3%, suggesting that a substantial share of respondents viewed a combination of facilities and technologies as necessary to improve learning. Another 20% mentioned equipment such as adjustable chairs and desks, pointing to the value of adaptable physical spaces in meeting students' needs. Technologies such as the "Induction loop system and hearing assistance devices" were mentioned by 13.3% of respondents, showing that some students value assistive listening technology. "Specialized educational software" and "Tailored learning tools" each accounted for 16.7% of responses, suggesting that digital resources adapted to individual needs are also regarded as beneficial.

3.5 Hypothesis 5 (Ho5)

Table 7 Spaces Needing Improvement in Schools for SWD

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%

Table 7 identifies classrooms and playgrounds/fields as the school areas most in need of improvement to make facilities more comprehensive for SWD. Each was selected by 33.3% of respondents, pointing to a strong demand for changes in both settings. Respondents appear to view greater accessibility and support in these spaces as necessary for creating a more comprehensive environment for SWD. Because classrooms are central to learning, improvements might include adaptable seating, specialized educational technology, and instructional materials that are accessible to SWD. Playgrounds and fields also matter for physical education and social interaction; possible changes include accessible play equipment, pathways, and facilities that enable all students to take part fully. Corridors were identified by 10% of respondents, libraries by 16.7%, and "Other" spaces by 10%; the last category could cover facilities not listed. Only 3.35% of respondents identified restrooms, canteens, and laboratories, respectively. These areas matter, but respondents appeared to assign them less urgency than classrooms and playgrounds/fields.

4 Discussion

This study assesses how SWD view the adequacy of school facilities. Data from Ho1 indicate that most students consider the facilities satisfactory, although a small number are dissatisfied with their condition. The findings also show that facilities for SWD remain inadequate in every building, particularly at universities (Chan et al., 2022). The data from Ho2 indicate that most students strongly agree their special needs, including physical infrastructure and digital technology are adequately provided for. Still, a small group disagreed, suggesting that both physical access and digital technology require further improvement. Ahmad and others (2023) identify assistive technology as one of the most critical challenges for inclusive education practices among SWD at X University in Jordan. Ho3's survey indicates that most students believe the school's facilities have a positive effect on their learning and achievements. Although a minority disagreed, none strongly disagreed. Ghazali and colleagues (2024) stress that SWD's success in higher education depends on access to support services and accommodations suited to their individual needs, regardless of the type of institution. The data from Ho4 indicate that respondents view facilities such as ramps, elevators, and easily accessible pathways as having a positive effect on their learning. Several respondents also mentioned the benefits of adjustable chairs, specialized software, and other learning tools. Induction loops and hearing devices were seen as less significant, though they still require attention. These features contribute to the learning experience of SWD. Li (2025) stated that integrating physical and digital accessibility requires a holistic approach. In practice, this means updating older buildings with ramps, elevators, and wider pathways, while also furnishing lecture halls with accessible furniture. Digital access matters as well: inclusive features such as screen readers, text-to-speech tools, and video captions are essential for ensuring that SWD can participate in academic activities. The data in Ho5 indicates that students see a need to improve several spaces, particularly classrooms and playgrounds. They also want greater attention given to libraries, corridors, and other areas they use. Most respondents agree that facilities such as toilets, canteens, and laboratories require further improvement. In research conducted at the University of Malaya, Shahrul Anuar et al. (2023) likewise emphasize the need for better facilities, including accessible lecture halls, restrooms, and recreational areas.

5. Conclusion

The present study examined cases involving SWD and the effects of facilities on their learning. Although most participants were satisfied with the facilities provided at schools, several aspects appear to have been overlooked and still require improvement to support a smooth learning process. These include physical infrastructure in particular spaces and digital technologies such as Braille software. Classrooms and playgrounds were specifically identified as areas needing attention. The study also revealed the genuine opinions of SWD facility users in a transparent manner. The findings show that the government continues to regard issues involving SWD facilities as ongoing concerns that require improvement through user feedback and evaluations. They also suggest that the

concept of UDP has been maximally realized, though some details still need attention. Adapted materials, including Braille, audio, and content compatible with screen readers, help SWD to learn and take part fully. Through universal design(UD) and accessible educational facilities, they advance SDGs 3, 8, 10, and 11 by supporting inclusion, accessibility, employability, and well-being. Input from teachers and management remains necessary to provide a fuller account of facility-related problems. The decline in Malaysia's registered student population cannot be attributed only to inadequate facilities; other factors may also be involved and still require investigation.

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