

# Social Inclusion Policies and Learners' Engagement in School Activities

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## ABSTRACT

This study assessed the relationship between social inclusion policies and learner engagement in District V, Division of Malaybalay City, during the 2025–2026 school year. Using a descriptive-correlational design, the research examined policy implementation across five domains: teachers' knowledge, attitudes, school resources, professional development, and administrative support. Data were collected through complete enumeration of public-school teachers using a validated questionnaire and analyzed via descriptive and inferential statistics.

Findings reveal a large extent of implementation across all social inclusion domains, with teachers demonstrating robust knowledge and egalitarian attitudes. Similarly, learners exhibit high engagement in both curricular and co-curricular activities, reflecting strong academic investment and a sense of belonging. Correlation analysis confirms a significant positive relationship between policy implementation and learner engagement ( $r = .497$ ,  $p = .000$ ), with administrative support and resource availability emerging as the strongest predictors of student involvement.

The study concludes that while teacher readiness is high, sustained success depends on bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and structural support. Structured policy implementation, driven by proactive leadership and equitable resource distribution, directly enhances student participation. Recommendations include institutionalizing specialized professional development for teachers to refine inclusive pedagogies and empowering learners to take active roles in classroom discourse. Furthermore, school heads must champion a supportive climate by regularly evaluating policies and strategically allocating resources. By fostering a "wraparound" support system, schools can transform inclusive frameworks into a lived reality that ensures the academic and social success of every learner.

**Keywords:** Social Inclusion Policies, Learner Engagement, Teacher Perspectives, Malaybalay City, Inclusive Education

## INTRODUCTION

Students from low-income families have to overcome several obstacles to complete their education and benefit from it. These obstacles include inadequate resources, a lack of academic resources at home, and issues stemming from unstable living conditions, all of which adversely affect their learning experiences and overall development. These drawbacks contribute to inequality in educational provision, underscoring the importance of studying how social inclusion policies function in schools and of promoting the interests of these vulnerable students. The solution to this problem can open avenues that give all learners a fair chance to achieve success.

Previous studies have revealed the significance of inclusion education policies in assisting marginalized students. The Pathways to Education project in Canada was one such example, in which extensive support, including tutoring and financial assistance, had a significant effect on the graduation rate of low-income students (Rowen, 2007). Stipend schemes increase the attendance of disadvantaged students in Bangladesh, but teacher readiness on inclusion practices is inconsistent (RSIS International, 2024). Likewise, NASSP (2019) emphasized the

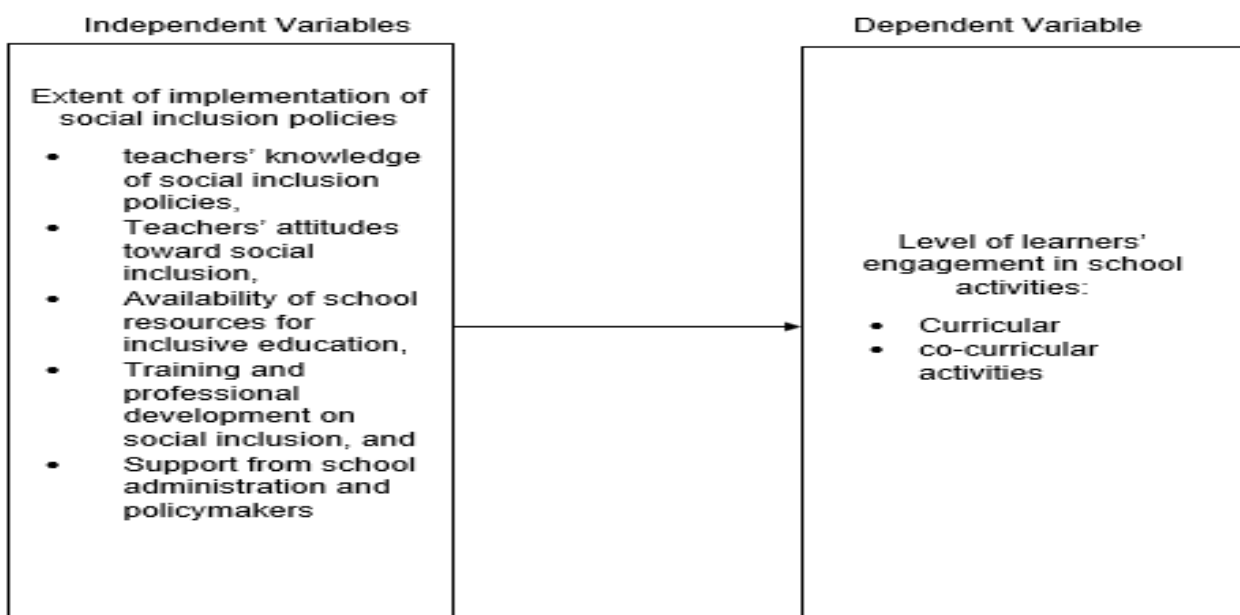
negative impact of poverty on students' academic performance and called for equal funding and favorable school conditions.

Even though social inclusion policies should be used to benefit the disadvantaged students, there is a dearth of research on their implementation and effectiveness. The majority of research focuses on student performance or policy models, but does not consider teachers' experience and responses to the challenge of creating inclusive classrooms. One way to fill this gap is to investigate teachers' perceptions, which can help clarify the challenges they encounter and the realities of policy implementation across different school environments, thereby improving policy effectiveness.

The current study is crucial because teachers are among the core stakeholders in implementing social inclusion policies, and their insights can reveal key factors that determine the policy's success or failure. Knowledge of teachers' experiences helps school leaders and policymakers implement interventions more effectively, provide targeted assistance, and distribute resources more efficiently to meet the needs of low-income students and their families. Conclusively, this study will help advance efforts to promote equity and social inclusion in education and guarantee opportunities for every student to excel in education and social life.

This study is anchored on the most appropriate theory of learning to support a study that considers the perspectives of educators on social inclusion and the effectiveness of social inclusion to low-income learners is: Sociocultural Theory: Author and Year of Publication Sociocultural Theory (SCT) Justification According to Vygotsky, social interaction and cultural environment are the key to cognitive development and learning: Sociocultural Theory (SCT) Sociocultural Theory (SCT) Sociocultural Theory (SCT) Sociocultural Theory (SCT) Sociocultural Theory (SCT) Sociocultural Theory (SCT) Sociocultural Theory (SCT) In the context of the social inclusion policies, SCT directly addresses the core issue, the interaction between the cultural and social environment which is the educational institution and its policies, resources, and administrative support and individual learning and development, which is students with economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

The variable Support from School Administration and Policymakers indicates the level of organizational commitment, clear leadership, consistent encouragement, support for work alleviation, and defense of hard, comprehensive choices. Once this happens, teachers become far more willing to go out of their way to reach low-income students, which demonstrates that inclusion is a company-wide priority. The schematic diagram of the study is provided in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Schematic Diagram showing the Relationship of the Independent and Dependent Variables of the Study**

This study was conducted to assess the implementation of social inclusion policies and the level of learners' engagement in school activities in District V, Division of Malaybalay City, SY 2025-2026.

Specifically, this study endeavored to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent of implementation of social inclusion policies in terms of teachers' knowledge of social inclusion policies, teachers' attitudes toward social inclusion, availability of school resources for inclusive education, training and professional development on social inclusion, and support from school administration and policymakers?
2. What is the level of learners' engagement in school activities in terms of curricular and co-curricular activities?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the extent of implementation of social inclusion policies and the level of learners' engagement in school activities in terms of curricular and co-curricular activities?

### **Hypothesis of the Study**

The hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance. Ho. There is no significant relationship between the extent of implementation of social inclusion policies and learners' engagement in school activities, whether curricular or co-curricular.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

The research design adopted in this study was a quantitative, descriptive-survey design to evaluate the implementation of social inclusion policies and the extent of learners' participation in school activities in District V, Division of Malaybalay City. The descriptive-survey method was well-suited because it aimed to outline the prevailing situation regarding teachers' knowledge, attitudes, resources, training, support, and perceived effectiveness of social inclusion policies without controlling for variables. Information on the level of adoption of social inclusion policies in their schools was gathered through a researcher-developed questionnaire, and the effectiveness of these policies in meeting the needs of students from low-income families was evaluated from the learners' perspective.

### **Research Locale**

This study was conducted in District V, Malaybalay City Division, Bukidnon, Philippines, during the School Year 2025–2026. Malaybalay City is the provincial capital of Bukidnon, located in Northern Mindanao (Region X), with a population of 190,712, according to the 2020 Census of Population and Housing. Impasugong geographically borders the city to the north, Lantapan to the west, Valencia City and San Fernando to the south, and Cabanglasan and Agusan del Sur to the east. The study was conducted in six public elementary schools in District V: Panamucan Elementary School, Natid-asan Elementary School, Mabuhay Integrated School, San Jose Elementary School, Airport Village Elementary School, and Casisang Central Integrated School. These schools represent both urban and rural communities within the district and provide diverse learning environments for Grade 1 learners.

### **Respondents of the Study**

The study respondents comprised 139 public school teachers from the selected schools in District V during the School Year 2025–2026. These teachers were directly involved in implementing instructional programs and school policies related to learner development and classroom practices.

### **Sampling Procedure**

The study employed complete enumeration (census sampling). All teachers at the selected schools in District V were included as respondents because they had the necessary experience and knowledge relevant to the study's objectives. Using complete enumeration ensured full representation of the teacher population within the district.

## Research Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-developed survey questionnaire. The instrument consisted of two parts.

Part I measured the extent of implementation of school programs and instructional practices using a five-point Likert scale. Part II gathered information regarding the level of learner participation in school-related activities. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement by selecting the response that best reflected their perception or experience.

## Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Prior to the main data collection, the research instrument underwent pilot testing with 30 teachers from public schools who had characteristics similar to those of the target respondents but were not included in the final sample. Content validity was established through expert review to ensure that the questionnaire items were clear, relevant, and aligned with the study variables. The reliability of the instrument was measured using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient, which yielded a value of 0.938. This result indicates high internal consistency, suggesting that the instrument was reliable for use in the study.

## Data Gathering Procedure

The study followed a strict, multi-level process of obtaining permission to conduct the data collection. The researcher first obtained an approval and endorsement letter from the Dean of the Graduate School. This letter was subsequently presented to the Superintendent of Schools in the Division of Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, for approval. After receiving divisional approval, the researcher requested the Public Schools District Supervisor of District V to approve the research to be done in the district. The researcher eventually contacted the leaders of the chosen campuses to obtain their final consent to use their facilities and staff. The questionnaires were then distributed to the teacher-respondents who had been chosen after this procedural approval.

## Scoring Procedure

The following rating scales were used to interpret the data. The mean was calculated using a Five-Point Likert Scale to assess the level of implementation of the social inclusion policy in their schools.

To assess the extent of social inclusion policy implementation in their schools, the following scores were used.

Scale	Range	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Description
5	4.20-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very Large Extent
4	3.40-4.19	Agree	Large Extent
3	2.60-3.39	Neutral	Moderate Extent
2	1.80-2.59	Disagree	Small Extent
1	1.00-1.79	Strongly Disagree	Very Small Extent

## Level of Learners’ Engagement in School Activities

Scale	Range	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Description
5	4.20-5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High Level
4	3.40-4.19	Agree	High Level
3	2.60-3.39	Neutral	Moderate Level
2	1.80-2.59	Disagree	Low Level
1	1.00-1.79	Strongly Disagree	Very Low Level

## Statistical Treatment of Data

**The statistical procedures used in the research to analyze the data were as follows:**

The use of mean and standard deviation was used to identify the level of implementation of the social inclusion policies at their schools in regards to the knowledge of the teachers about social inclusion policies, the attitude of teachers towards social inclusion, the availability of school resources to inclusive education, the training and professional development on social inclusion, and the school administration and policymakers’ support.

The level of learners' engagement in school activities was determined using the mean and standard deviation. The Pearson r Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was used to assess the association between the level of enforcement of the social inclusion policy in their schools and learners' involvement in school activities.

**Ethical Considerations**

The study also adhered to the highest ethical standards to safeguard the well-being of all participants, given their professional status and the sensitivity of the policy implementation. All teacher-respondents were informed of the study's purpose and procedures, and that they were free to continue participating voluntarily and had the right to withdraw without penalty before any data were collected. Anonymity and confidentiality were preserved by ensuring that the data in the questionnaires could not be linked to any identifiable information. They were represented in aggregate form, which did not allow attribution of any particular views to any person or school in District V.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the collected data to address the research problems. The discussion focuses on the extent of implementation of social inclusion policies, the level of learners’ engagement in school activities, and the relationship between them.

**Extent of Implementation of Social Inclusion Policies**

Table 1. Overall Extent of Implementation of Social Inclusion Policies

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Teachers’ Knowledge of Social Inclusion Policies	4.25	0.529	Very Large Extent
Teachers’ Attitudes toward Social Inclusion	4.34	0.541	Very Large Extent
Availability of School Resources for Inclusive Education	3.61	0.683	Large Extent
Training and Professional Development on Social Inclusion	3.65	0.733	Large Extent
Support from School Administration and Policymakers	4.06	0.673	Large Extent
Overall Mean	3.98	0.632	Large Extent

Table 1 presents the overall extent of implementation of social inclusion policies in District V, Division of Malaybalay City. The results show an overall mean of 3.98 (SD = 0.632) interpreted as Large Extent, indicating that social inclusion policies are generally implemented across schools. Among the sub-variables, teachers’ attitudes toward social inclusion (M = 4.34) obtained the highest mean, followed by teachers’ knowledge of social inclusion policies (M = 4.25). These findings indicate that teachers possess strong awareness and positive beliefs regarding inclusive education. Positive teacher attitudes and knowledge are essential to the successful implementation of inclusive policies because educators are the primary agents translating policy into classroom practice.

These findings support the concept of inclusive pedagogy, which emphasizes that teachers’ beliefs and understanding of inclusive principles influence how they respond to diverse learner needs. Teachers who possess a strong awareness of inclusion policies are more likely to adopt equitable teaching strategies and create supportive learning environments. On the other hand, the availability of school resources (M = 3.61) and training and professional development (M = 3.65) received comparatively lower means, although still interpreted as Large Extent. This suggests that while teachers demonstrate readiness and positive attitudes toward inclusion,

structural and institutional supports such as resources and professional development opportunities may still require strengthening.

The findings highlight that effective implementation of social inclusion policies requires not only teacher commitment but also adequate institutional support. Inclusive education is more likely to succeed when schools provide sufficient learning materials, infrastructure, and continuous training programs that equip teachers with practical strategies for addressing diverse learner needs. The results also indicate that support from school administration and policymakers (M = 4.06) contributes significantly to the implementation of social inclusion policies. Strong leadership support helps establish inclusive school cultures and ensures that policies are effectively translated into classroom practices. Overall, the findings imply that while teachers demonstrate strong readiness for inclusive education, continued investment in resources, training, and administrative support is necessary to sustain inclusive practices in schools fully.

### Level of Learners’ Engagement in School Activities

Table 2. Level of Learners’ Engagement in School Activities

Engagement Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Curricular Activities	3.96	0.509	High Level
Co-Curricular Activities	3.83	0.677	High Level
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.90</b>	<b>0.593</b>	<b>High Level</b>

Table 2 presents the level of learners’ engagement in school activities. The results show an overall mean of 3.90 (SD = 0.593) interpreted as High Level, indicating that learners actively participate in both curricular and co-curricular activities. Among the two dimensions, curricular engagement (M = 3.96) had a slightly higher mean than co-curricular engagement (M = 3.83). This suggests that learners demonstrate stronger participation in classroom-based activities such as discussions, collaborative work, and assignment completion. High levels of curricular engagement reflect learners’ behavioral and cognitive involvement in the learning process. When students actively participate in classroom activities, they develop a deeper understanding of lesson content and improve their academic performance.

The results also indicate that learners are engaged in co-curricular activities, although at a slightly lower level. Participation in school organizations, competitions, and volunteer activities contributes to learners’ social development and sense of belonging within the school community. These findings suggest that inclusive school environments encourage learners to become active participants in both academic and extracurricular activities. Inclusive educational practices help create supportive learning spaces where learners feel valued and motivated to engage in school life. The results imply that schools should continue promoting inclusive learning environments that encourage student participation, collaboration, and leadership opportunities both inside and outside the classroom.

### Relationship Between Social Inclusion Policies and Learners’ Engagement

Table 3. Relationship Between Social Inclusion Policies and Learners’ Engagement

Variable	r	p-value	Interpretation
Teachers’ Knowledge of Social Inclusion Policies	.306	.000	Significant
Teachers’ Attitudes toward Social Inclusion	.189	.026	Significant
Availability of School Resources for Inclusive Education	.387	.000	Significant
Training and Professional Development	.337	.000	Significant
Support from School Administration and Policymakers	.468	.000	Significant
<b>Overall</b>	<b>.497</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>Significant</b>

Table 3 presents the correlation between the extent of implementation of social inclusion policies and learners’ engagement in school activities. The results show a significant positive relationship (r = .497, p = .000) between the two variables.

This indicates that schools with stronger implementation of social inclusion policies tend to have higher levels of learner engagement. When inclusive practices are effectively implemented, students are more likely to participate actively in classroom activities and school programs. Among the variables, support from school administration and policymakers ( $r = .468$ ) showed the strongest relationship with learner engagement. This suggests that leadership support plays a critical role in promoting inclusive school environments that encourage student participation.

Administrative leadership helps create policies, allocate resources, and establish school cultures that support inclusive education. When school leaders actively promote inclusion, teachers receive the support they need to implement inclusive strategies that benefit all learners.

Similarly, availability of school resources ( $r = .387$ ) and training and professional development ( $r = .337$ ) also demonstrated significant relationships with learner engagement. These findings indicate that adequate resources and teacher training contribute to improved student participation and learning outcomes. In contrast, although teachers' knowledge ( $r = .306$ ) and attitudes ( $r = .189$ ) were significantly related to learner engagement, their influence was relatively weaker than that of institutional factors. This suggests that teacher beliefs alone may not be sufficient to promote engagement unless appropriate resources, training, and administrative leadership support them.

Overall, the results emphasize that effective implementation of social inclusion policies requires a combination of teacher readiness, institutional support, and leadership commitment. These elements work together to create inclusive school environments that foster active learner participation.

The findings therefore reject the null hypothesis, indicating that a significant relationship exists between the extent of implementation of social inclusion policies and the level of learners' engagement in school activities.

## CONCLUSION

This study made the following concluding findings based on the above findings.

Although educators express attitudes of high levels of knowledge and egalitarianism, their positions for long-term success are expected to be based on enhancing resource allocation and leadership programs. Regular professional growth and active administrative support should be the main priorities for schools so that inclusion policies can be effectively translated into meaningful student engagement.

Students have a high level of involvement in both curricular and co-curricular activities, indicating a strong investment in their academics and social identity. To maintain this, the schools must continue to encourage interactive classroom conversations and inclusive after-school activities so that students remain behaviorally available, cognitively challenged, and emotionally involved in the school fraternity.

The research affirms that social inclusion policies play a major role in student engagement, particularly through the provision of administrative support and resources. This connection confirms that organized policy enactment has a direct and significant value-add in terms of academic and social participation. This means that schools should focus on institutional support and the balanced allocation of resources to transform inclusive models into practical changes in student engagement and achievement.

## Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research relied primarily on teachers' perceptions regarding the implementation of social inclusion policies and learners' engagement. While teachers play a critical role in policy implementation, their perspectives may not fully capture the actual experiences and viewpoints of learners.

The absence of direct data from students, parents, and school administrators limits the comprehensiveness of the findings and may result in a partial understanding of inclusive practices. Second, the study was conducted only within District V of the Division of Malaybalay City. This limited geographical scope may restrict the

generalizability of the findings to other districts or educational contexts with different demographic and institutional characteristics.

Finally, the use of a purely quantitative research design may have constrained the depth of analysis. Although statistical data provided measurable insights into relationships among variables, it may have overlooked nuanced experiences, contextual factors, and lived realities associated with the implementation of social inclusion policies.

### Recommendations for Future Research

Future research may expand the scope of this study by including multiple stakeholders such as learners, parents, and school administrators to obtain a more comprehensive and balanced perspective on the effectiveness of social inclusion policies. Incorporating diverse viewpoints can provide deeper insights into how inclusive practices are experienced across different levels of the school community.

Researchers are also encouraged to conduct similar studies across multiple districts or regions to enhance the generalizability of the findings and enable comparative analysis of inclusive education practices across varied contexts.

Moreover, future studies may adopt a mixed-methods approach that integrates qualitative techniques such as interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations. These methods can enrich the findings by capturing detailed narratives and contextual factors that are not easily measured through quantitative tools alone.

Lastly, longitudinal studies are recommended to examine the long-term impact of social inclusion policies on learner engagement and academic outcomes. Such research can provide a clearer understanding of how inclusive practices influence student development over time.

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