


## Hardiness Personality of Shadow Teachers Who Accompany More Than 1 Special Needs Student

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i5.1306>

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### A B S T R A C T

Education is a fundamental right for every individual, including persons with disabilities, as stipulated in the 1945 Constitution and reinforced through various national regulations. Inclusive education serves as a means to fulfill this right by accommodating the needs of children with special needs (CSN) within regular school environments. One of the key roles in this system is the shadow teacher, a special assistant who provides individualized support to CSN. However, in practice, shadow teachers face numerous challenges, especially when assisting more than one student simultaneously. This condition demands not only theoretical knowledge but also psychological resilience, known as hardiness, which consists of three main components: control, commitment, and challenge. This study aims to explore the hardiness traits of a shadow teacher who supports more than one CSN in an inclusive elementary school in the Tanggulangin area. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach and data collection through semi-structured interviews, the study involved one main subject (the shadow teacher) and two supporting informants (a homeroom teacher and a fellow shadow teacher). The findings reveal that the subject possesses a strong sense of control, demonstrated by the ability to manage tasks professionally and flexibly according to students' needs. Commitment is shown through active involvement in the entire learning and development process of the students, including coordination with teachers, parents, and therapists. The challenge aspect is reflected in how the subject views difficulties as opportunities for growth, marked by improvements in decision-making, emotional regulation, and problem-solving. These findings suggest that hardiness is a crucial trait for shadow teachers to perform their roles effectively and maintain psychological well-being within inclusive educational settings.

**Keywords:** *Hardiness, Shadow Teacher, School, Inclusive, Special Needs Students*

#### Article History:

Received 30<sup>th</sup> July 2025

Accepted 28<sup>th</sup> August 2025

Published 09<sup>th</sup> September 2025



### INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental right for all individuals, including persons with disabilities, as guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution, Article 31, Paragraph 1, which affirms that "Every citizen has the right to education" (Aulia & Hariono, 2022; Septiningsih & Iqbal, 2021). This principle is further emphasized in Law No. 20 of 2023, Article 5, which underscores that every citizen has equal rights to quality education. Specifically, Paragraph 2 grants children with physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, or social impairments the right to special education (Afifah et al., 2025). In line with these provisions, inclusive education has emerged as an important approach to ensuring the educational rights of children with special needs (CSN).

Inclusive education provides opportunities for CSN to learn alongside their peers in regular schools, promoting equality and social integration. To achieve this, schools must implement systems that support diverse learners, including facilities, infrastructure, and qualified teaching staff. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 48 of 2023 mandates inclusive schools to accommodate students with disabilities, ensuring their participation in classroom learning (Afifah et al., 2025). Through this integration, students gain opportunities for mutual understanding and adaptation,

though effective implementation requires specialized support, particularly from shadow teachers (Aulia & Hariono, 2022).

A shadow teacher plays a crucial role in inclusive classrooms by providing individualized assistance to CSN. These teachers are equipped with knowledge and skills related to special needs education, working to create a child-friendly learning environment that adapts to each student's abilities. They often collaborate closely with homeroom teachers to adjust lessons, manage behaviors, and foster a supportive environment (Widyawati & Marjuni, 2023). Their role ensures that CSN not only access education but also participate meaningfully within the learning process.

In carrying out their duties, shadow teachers must possess competencies that extend beyond teaching. They are responsible for identifying each student's needs, selecting suitable learning strategies, and ensuring lessons align with the child's developmental progress (Hidayah & Wiyanti, 2023). However, supporting CSN is challenging, as these students often experience limitations and emotional fluctuations, including tantrums or sudden behavioral shifts. These challenges differ significantly from those encountered with regular students, demanding greater patience, flexibility, and problem-solving abilities (Afifah et al., 2025; Putri & Handayani, 2021).

Given these demands, shadow teachers require strong psychological resilience, often described as hardiness. Hardiness equips individuals to withstand stress and maintain effectiveness in the face of difficulties (Maddi, 2013, as cited in Aulia & Hariono, 2022). It consists of three elements: control, the belief in one's ability to influence outcomes; commitment, engagement in meaningful tasks; and challenge, viewing obstacles as opportunities for growth (Kobasa & Maddi in Baritone et al., 1989, as cited in Septiningsih & Iqbal, 2021). For shadow teachers, hardiness is a key factor in sustaining their mental well-being and effectiveness in inclusive classrooms.

Research has shown that educators with high levels of hardiness exhibit greater adaptability, stronger self-control, and better decision-making under pressure (Septiningsih & Iqbal, 2021). They perceive difficulties as opportunities for learning rather than threats, enabling them to manage stress more constructively (Afifah et al., 2025). These qualities are essential for shadow teachers, who must frequently adjust their methods to meet the unpredictable needs of CSN while maintaining classroom stability and fostering positive student development.

However, a unique challenge arises when one shadow teacher is assigned to assist more than one CSN simultaneously. In certain contexts, such as schools in the early stages of implementing inclusive education, this arrangement is considered manageable, especially if the students' conditions appear less severe. Yet, this practice introduces significant additional burdens. Inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and the lack of well-developed learning models in new inclusive schools amplify the complexity of the shadow teacher's responsibilities (Safitri & Fitriana, 2024).

This study seeks to explore the hardiness characteristics of a shadow teacher working with multiple CSN in an inclusive elementary school in the Tanggulangin area. The urgency of this research lies in understanding the resilience required to cope with such complex workloads, especially in a school still developing its inclusive practices. The novelty of this study rests in its focus on shadow teachers supporting two or more CSN simultaneously, a topic that has received limited scholarly attention. By examining this unique context, the research aims to contribute valuable insights into the psychological resilience needed by shadow teachers, thereby informing strategies for strengthening inclusive education practices in Indonesia.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to meticulously detail the lived experiences and perceptions of shadow teachers regarding hardiness in their daily work environment (Moleong, 2021; Sugiyono, 2023). Phenomenological research is

particularly suitable for exploring complex human phenomena within their natural context, aiming to understand the essence of experiences as they are lived by individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 2022). This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the hardiness personality among shadow teachers assisting multiple students with special needs, providing rich descriptive data that captures the nuances of their challenges and resilience.

### **Data Collection Instruments and Techniques**

Semi-structured interviews were the primary technique for data collection in this research, designed to gather detailed information from the subjects while maintaining focus on the research topic (Sudaryono, 2022). The interview instrument consisted of pre-formulated questions that guided the discussion, ensuring that responses remained pertinent to the research objectives (Emzir, 2023). However, flexibility was maintained to allow for follow-up questions or deeper probes as needed, ensuring comprehensive data acquisition without deviating from the core topic (Given, 2021). This method facilitated a thorough understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives on hardiness within their professional roles.

### **Population and Sample**

The data collection centered on one main subject and two supporting informants (significant others). The main subject was a shadow teacher who met the following criteria: (1) currently working as a shadow teacher; (2) employed at an inclusive elementary school in the Tanggulangin area; (3) actively assisting more than one student with special needs simultaneously; and (4) possessing a minimum of one year of work experience as a shadow teacher. The two supporting informants were chosen based on these criteria: (1) a homeroom teacher and a fellow shadow teacher; (2) having direct knowledge of the main shadow teacher's activities; and (3) working at the same inclusive elementary school (Sugiyono, 2023). This selection strategy aimed to provide a comprehensive and triangulated understanding of the phenomenon from various perspectives (Patton, 2015).

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using a domain analysis technique, which allowed the researcher to present a complex and holistic overview of the research topic (Spradley, 1979, as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data analysis process comprised three systematic stages (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019; Sudaryono, 2022): (1) Data Reduction: This initial stage involved sifting through and simplifying the raw interview data collected from the field, preparing it for further processing. This included selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data (Moleong, 2021). (2) Data Display: In this stage, the reduced data were organized and presented in a coherent manner, facilitating the drawing of conclusions. This could involve matrices, graphs, networks, and charts (Emzir, 2023). (3) Conclusion Drawing: The final stage involved formulating conclusions based on the processed and analyzed data, interpreted against the theoretical framework of hardiness used in the study (Sugiyono, 2023). This iterative process ensured the trustworthiness and rigor of the qualitative findings.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study aimed to investigate the hardiness personality of a shadow teacher who accompanies more than one student with special needs. As previously established, hardiness encompasses three primary dimensions: control, commitment, and challenge. The findings, derived from semi-structured interviews with one primary subject (the shadow teacher) and two supporting informants (a homeroom teacher and a fellow shadow teacher), are detailed below, followed by a comprehensive discussion.

### **Control**

The control aspect of hardiness refers to an individual's belief in their ability to influence conditions and outcomes. In the context of their role as a shadow teacher, the subject consistently demonstrated a strong sense of control. Their initial, brief experience in inclusive education ignited a profound interest, motivating them to pursue this career path with conviction. This intrinsic motivation allowed the subject to approach their work proactively,

believing that their efforts could genuinely impact the learning environment and student development, even amidst inherent complexities (Maddi, 2013).

The subject's professionalism was evident in their focused dedication to assisting students with special needs, applying their accumulated knowledge and experience. While acknowledging that direct support for these students doesn't always proceed seamlessly—given the diversity of student conditions and external factors like student moods that are beyond their direct influence—the subject adeptly managed these variables. They adapted their teaching styles and models as needed, striving to achieve learning targets despite potential disruptions. This flexible and responsive approach underscores their capacity to maintain a sense of influence over their work, even when faced with unpredictable elements (Septiningsih & Iqbal, 2021).

Beyond their core responsibilities, the subject actively contributed to the broader school community, assisting in the classroom, supporting fellow shadow teachers, and participating in school events. This wide range of engagements necessitated excellent task management, which the subject executed with notable flexibility and professionalism. This ability to juggle multiple demands while remaining effective highlights their strong self-management skills, a key indicator of high control. Furthermore, the supportive role of school stakeholders, particularly the homeroom teacher who facilitated resources and assistance, significantly reinforced the subject's capacity for control, allowing them to optimize their performance and cater to the varied needs of students (Aulia & Hariono, 2022).

### **Commitment**

The commitment aspect of hardiness reflects an individual's deep involvement and belief in the meaningfulness of their activities. The subject exemplified a high degree of commitment through their direct and active engagement in every stage of supporting students with special needs. This began with the meticulous development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and extended to the delivery of instructional materials, the creation of tailored worksheets, and the cultivation of crucial non-academic skills such as discipline and independence (Kobasa & Maddi in Baritone et al., 1989).

This dedication was not confined to direct student interaction; it also encompassed vital coordination with general education teachers, parents, and student therapists. This holistic approach demonstrated a comprehensive dedication to the students' overall learning and development. Both the homeroom teacher and a fellow shadow teacher affirmed the profound benefits of the subject's active participation, noting how the subject not only assisted the homeroom teacher with students facing academic challenges but also served as an invaluable resource for discussions and consultations among other shadow teachers (Pratiwi & Fakhri, 2023).

Furthermore, the subject's commitment was reinforced by their proactive pursuit of professional growth. This included consistent participation in training programs, ongoing coordination, and regular consultations with psychologists and other relevant specialists. Such initiatives underscored their unwavering dedication to achieving optimal outcomes in their work, highlighting a strong sense of purpose and belief in the value of their contributions to inclusive education (Afifah et al., 2025).

### **Challenge**

The challenge aspect of hardiness refers to the belief that difficulties and obstacles are opportunities for personal growth and development rather than threats. As a shadow teacher supporting students with special needs, whose conditions and requirements are inherently diverse and distinct from those of regular students, the subject naturally encountered a wide array of complexities and demanding situations (Febriani & Kasiyati, 2024).

However, the subject consistently embraced these difficulties as catalysts for self-improvement. They reported a significant positive evolution in their personal capabilities and professional skills directly attributable to confronting and overcoming these challenges. This included a noticeable enhancement in their emotional control and an increased ease in resolving work-related problems; the subject developed a refined intuition for appropriate actions when issues arose, or even recurred (Maddi, 2013).

Individuals working alongside the subject also acknowledged these positive transformations. They specifically noted improvements in the subject's decision-making, increasingly effective and timely problem-solving, enhanced emotional regulation, and an improved ability to connect with students from diverse backgrounds and with varying abilities. This collective observation underscores how the subject's **hardiness** allowed them to not only adapt to the dynamic and demanding environment of inclusive education but also to continuously evolve and excel in their multifaceted role (Septiningsih & Iqbal, 2021).

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study robustly support the theoretical framework of hardiness, demonstrating how its three core components—control, commitment, and challenge—manifest in the professional life of a shadow teacher handling multiple students with special needs. The subject's high sense of control is particularly critical given the unpredictable nature of working with diverse student populations. This aligns with Maddi's (2013) assertion that individuals with high control believe they can influence their circumstances, rather than being mere victims of them. This internal locus of control empowers the shadow teacher to adapt their pedagogical approaches, manage unexpected behavioral shifts, and effectively juggle multiple responsibilities, including classroom assistance and school committee duties. The supportive school environment, especially the collaboration with the homeroom teacher, further augments this sense of control, creating a crucial buffer against potential burnout and reinforcing their professional efficacy (Aulia & Hariono, 2022).

The subject's profound commitment to their role is evident in their active engagement across all aspects of student development, from crafting individualized education programs to coordinating with various stakeholders like parents and therapists. This level of involvement goes beyond mere job execution; it signifies a deep-seated belief in the meaningfulness of their work, a hallmark of high commitment in the hardiness construct (Kobasa & Maddi in Baritone et al., 1989). The positive feedback from colleagues, who directly benefit from the subject's collaborative spirit and problem-solving contributions, further underscores the tangible impact of this commitment. Furthermore, the subject's proactive pursuit of continuous professional development, through training and consultations with specialists, reflects a dedication to excellence and a proactive stance in achieving optimal outcomes for their students, demonstrating a strong identification with their purpose and role (Pratiwi & Fakhri, 2023).

Finally, the subject's approach to challenge highlights their ability to transform adversities into opportunities for personal and professional growth. Working with students with diverse special needs inevitably presents a myriad of unique difficulties, yet the subject perceives these not as roadblocks but as avenues for skill enhancement. This perspective has led to noticeable improvements in their emotional regulation, problem-solving capabilities, and decision-making—qualities that are essential for navigating the complexities of inclusive education. This aligns with the understanding that individuals high in challenge embrace change and view stressful events as opportunities for learning and development (Septiningsih & Iqbal, 2021). The observed positive transformations by colleagues further validate the subject's adaptive capacity, illustrating how their hardiness allows them to not only endure but thrive amidst the inherent demands of their multi-faceted role as a shadow teacher.

### CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals that hardiness is a crucial characteristic for shadow teachers working with multiple special needs students, as evidenced by strong demonstrations of control, commitment, and challenge in the subject. The findings indicate that the subject's ability to control their work environment, actively commit to student development, and perceive difficulties as challenges for growth significantly contributes to their effectiveness and psychological well-being in a demanding inclusive educational setting. Despite providing valuable insights into the hardiness of one shadow teacher through a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study's primary limitation lies in its small sample size,

which restricts the generalizability of these findings. Therefore, future research should consider employing quantitative methods with larger sample sizes to validate these observations across a broader population of shadow teachers. Additionally, further studies could explore longitudinal aspects of hardiness development in shadow teachers and investigate interventions or training programs designed to cultivate these essential traits, ultimately enhancing support for both educators and students in inclusive environments.

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