

LEARNING ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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ABSTRACT

The Government regulation states that education can be accessed by all students regardless of background, physical condition, ethnicity, race, and religion. However, in reality, there still needs to be more access for students, especially children with special needs, to Islamic education. This article further explores the process of teaching Islamic Religious Education to children with special needs. This research uses a qualitative research method (field research) with a data collection process through interviews with Nur Asih Ciputat Special School teachers and the surrounding community and direct observation of the learning process and documentation. The theory used in this research is the theory of inclusive education, which integrates with the theory of society (Luhman 1995). The results of the study show that learning Islamic religious education for students with special needs at the Nur Asih Special School is supported by the idea of exclusion from the surrounding community. The community provides essential information and messages as an institution that offers Islamic educational values to children with special needs. Community Involvement is a phenomenon that occurs in the lives of students with special needs in Islamic education teaching. Students can communicate freely and participate in society to experience learning Islamic education from the environment.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Society, and Islamic Education*

1. Introduction

Education is at the forefront of improving the quality of people's lives because education can enlighten and teach and is a means of realizing people's ideals (Sakir, 2014). However, the problem that then arises is whether Islamic educational institutions can respond to the quality of education in the global era (Choiri & Fitriani, 2011). Indicated that there was a mutual agreement that the goal of Islamic Education is to enhance and balance life quality at the individual and social levels so that learners could apply knowledge in everyday life to maintain happiness in multicultural communities, contribute to society with creativity, and through critical thinking, and take responsibility in preserving personal and social benefits. (Assalihee & Boonsuk, 2023)

Many PAI teachers must be more capable and prepared to face millennial students following the increasingly rapid flow of technology (Amaly et al., 2022)—especially the quality of Islamic education for children with special needs. Education for children with special needs is education that adapts to all learning obstacles and challenges that can meet students' individual needs. (Salsabila et al., 2023). Children with special needs have

the same rights in accessing and practicing Islamic religious values at school. (Widyastri et al., 2023) Thus, every student with special needs has the same rights as other students in accessing education. This concept provides the values of equality, tolerance, and recognition of diversity. Children with special needs need special attention from teachers to overcome the physical, psychological, and social obstacles they experience to achieve their desired educational goals.

Children with special needs have delays in both physical and non-physical aspects.(Rathomi, 2023) They are said to be abnormal because they have mental deficiencies and are slower than their peers, as well as having limitations in intelligence. (Sofia & Rasyidah, 2021). Therefore, teachers must be able to teach professionally and understand the different backgrounds of their students. In research conducted by Arianti et al., it was concluded that teachers found it difficult to explain and convey the material because each child had different abilities, and Islamic Religious Education books needed more availability.(Arianti et al., 2023). Even though the government has paid particular attention to inclusive education so that all children have the same rights to obtain education (Kurniawan, 2015)

The gap above is a severe problem, a shared responsibility between the government, educators, and social communities. Inclusive education should receive much attention because education is not only felt by ordinary people and children with special needs. College students with special education needs can benefit from efficient learning and a safe feeling. However, it presented difficulties in establishing a sense of belonging and clearly defining expectations, highlighting the need for customized approaches to satisfy their various needs.(Fabula, 2023)

Existing research focuses more on the role of teachers and parents in educating children with special needs. The community has a vital role and support because it interacts directly with the learning process of children with special needs. Several researchers who discuss inclusion and exclusion education, such as research conducted by Anna Cecilia Rapp, explain that schools are often referred to as institutions with many functions (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021). Suparman et al., in their research on the implications of Islamic Religious Education training for Children with Special Needs at the Enrekang State Special School, concluded that the supporting factors in implementing

Islamic religious education training were the support of the student's parents and teachers who had taught them painstakingly and patiently and were also supported by the school committee. Thus, the school as a forum for implementing learning and teachers and parents as educators who carry out teaching have the same functional relationship as supporters of implementing inclusive learning.

On the other hand, society is also called an institution that implements a value system within itself. The difference is only in legal status and formality. Society has a very significant role in education in Indonesia. The community can carry out the learning process and teach other communities. However, on the other hand, society seems to have given up and feels they have no sense of responsibility for education in Indonesia. (Sri Sumarti & Mohamad Ali, 2023). The involvement of parents and the community is a strong supporter of the success of education, so the relationship between the community and the school should be well established. They are indifferent to the nation's future and prioritize personal material needs rather than non-educational ones.

Society is not individuals who prioritize personal interests but is part of a system that is interconnected with each other. Society carries norms and religious values that can shape the character of children with special needs. There has been much research on Islamic religious education learning in inclusive education, but there is still very little to analyze the above problems using social system theory. For example, a school that takes a proactive approach to including students with special needs in Islamic religious education classes can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students. By incorporating the values and beliefs of different cultures and backgrounds into the curriculum, the school can help students develop a deeper understanding and respect for diversity within society. This holistic approach benefits students with special needs and promotes a sense of unity and acceptance within the school community. However, suppose the school only focuses on including students with special needs in Islamic education classes without addressing other aspects of their education and social interactions. In that case, it may perpetuate stereotypes and exclusion in different areas. Additionally, suppose the school does not provide adequate resources and support for students with special needs outside of religious education classes. In that case, it may create a segregated environment rather than a truly inclusive one.

Schools need to consider the holistic needs of students with special needs and ensure that they are fully integrated into all aspects of school life. This includes providing appropriate accommodations and support in academic subjects, extracurricular activities, and social interactions. By fostering an inclusive environment that values diversity and promotes acceptance, schools can create a more enriching and fulfilling experience for all students, regardless of their abilities. True inclusion requires a commitment to addressing every student's unique needs and challenges to create a supportive and welcoming community.

2. Literature Review

This research uses theories of *Inclusive Education* and *social system theory* developed by Niklas Luhmann. According to Parson in Bahri, society is a social system of many systems, such as family, education, and religious institutions that guide religious norms and values. (Bakhri & Fibrianto, 2018). Luhmann emphasizes that a fundamental element in society cannot be reduced, namely communication, because only communication can communicate. (Luhmann, 2002).

Communication is one of the elements in social society that can provide a clear understanding of other people in the social structure of society. Institutional theory (*institutionalism*) about education has become a global phenomenon. (Wiseman & Chase-Mayoral, 2013) Schools are institutions that carry out learning, but on the other hand, social society is also interpreted as a non-formal educational institution that has a value system. According to Luhman, society is not a collection of individuals but a collection of communications (Luhmann, 2002).

According to Anna Cecilia Rapp et al., the meaning of the term inclusion needs to be more recognized and defined. In empirical research on inclusive education, it is equated with the term democracy or freedom (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021)

Westwood States that inclusion organizations such as the *Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education (UK)* and the *Alliance for Inclusive Education (UK)* espouse a view that every child, regardless of ability or disability, has the right to education in their local mainstream school, the reality is that such an arrangement is neither

feasible nor desirable (Westwood, 2009).

Although pro-inclusion organizations such as *the Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education (UK)* and *Alliance for Inclusive Education (UK)* adhere to the view that every child, regardless of ability or disability, has the right to education by their local mainstream, in reality, such arrangements are neither feasible nor desirable. Existing policies in schools sometimes do not support inclusive education for both people with disabilities and children with mental deficiencies. Schools must be ready to deal with underdeveloped students who require special attention and need supporting facilities and infrastructure. The main focus on teaching basic academic skills to children with special needs has been retained, with comprehensive and critical coverage of adapting other curriculum areas. Differentiation of teaching methods, curriculum content, and resources is vital to inclusive classroom practice; teachers need to find differentiation in the classroom easy to implement or sustain over time. (P. S. Westwood, 2003) The extract above presents a definition of ‘special educational needs’ accepted in England and Wales. Most developed countries have similar views on a ‘special need.’

In Australia, for example, explain that the term ‘children with special needs’ refers primarily to children whose physical or intellectual capacities have been affected to some degree, so their participation in teaching and learning situations requires assistance. (Lang and Berberich, 1995). In the US, under a federal law definition, students with special needs are eligible for special services because their disability or impairment affects their educational performance. Included within this broad category are children with learning disability, speech or language disorders, mental retardation (intellectual disability), emotional disturbance, autism, hearing impairment, vision impairment, deaf-blindness, orthopedic impairments, traumatic brain injury, chronic health conditions, and severe and multiple disabilities.

Many writers point out that gifted and talented students also have special educational needs—but not all countries include the gifted category in their particular education services policies. With or without the inclusion of gifted and talented children, the population of students with special educational needs is highly diverse, and the education of these children presents a significant and ongoing challenge to teachers everywhere. (P. S. Westwood, 2003) The most apparent characteristic of students with

an intellectual disability is that they experience great difficulty learning almost everything that other students learn with comparative ease. They must learn to think quickly, reason deeply, remember easily, plan, and adapt rapidly to new situations. (P. Westwood, 2009) Of course, all students with intellectual disability have areas of relative strength, so teachers and parents need to identify these strengths to build upon them. Students with special education need to succeed academically and personally. They must feel safe and secure. (Fabula, 2023) Students with special learning needs may feel left out of the classroom and need help building relationships with peers and professors. Therefore, creating opportunities for social interactions is imperative to mitigate this challenge and promote community, improving the student's educational experience and well-being. (Fabula, 2023)

The policy for developing inclusive education in Indonesia still needs to be considered developed compared to other countries, even though UNESCO has instructed that inclusive education should be on the agenda in developing government policies. Attention to inclusive education is a global concern that requires particular policies and handling. Recent legislation in Belgium and the Netherlands focuses on the first typology and aims to reduce the existing school system of segregation and support inclusive education. (Mieghem et al., 2020).

Indonesia itself hopes that schools will have the convenience of implementing inclusive education and providing access to quality education for all by the mandate of the 1945 Law, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Goals of EFA (2000), the Bandung Declaration Towards Inclusion (2004) and the UN Declaration on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and Minister of National Education Regulation No. 70 (2009) concerning the Implementation of Inclusive Education. (Mudjito, 2009) The aim of this policy is none other than to provide support and eliminate the stigma of separating education for students with special needs from regular students. Hutapea, in his research, mentioned that teachers need more time to be ready to handle students professionally with special needs; this condition is a challenge and an obstacle in objectively measuring student learning outcomes. (Hutapea, 2024). Learning outcomes must be assessed objectively, which concerns cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. In vocational schools such as SMK, learning outcomes are shown by students'

success in practicing the theory learned. Therefore, success between theory and practice will simultaneously strengthen all aspects of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning outcomes. (Hutapea, 2024). The learning process at SMK is very distinctive because learning applies theory or concepts to practice.

Furthermore, in this regard, the teacher has a noble role and responsibility in successfully teaching students with special needs. Teachers only observe or observe as a whole without observation sheets that are compiled and worked out systematically. In other words, some aspects do not use or measure instruments that can professionally account for cognitive, affective, or psychomotor aspects. From the interview results, the assessment of the learning outcomes of students with needs was given on humanitarian grounds. The passing grade standard is based on the school's minimum passing criteria. So, teachers who provide assessments for students with special needs only refer to the school's policy.

The definition of children with special needs as imperfect children is a discussion within the disabled community itself. They do not accept themselves as children who are different from others. The term for a child with special needs is because to fulfill their life needs, this child needs assistance with educational services, social services, guidance and counseling services, and various other special services. (Putra et al., 2021) Frederickson and Cline think that if a child with special needs has learning difficulties requiring special educational provisions, his learning difficulties are much more significant than most children of the same age. (Frederickson et al., 2009). Thus, even though they feel capable of meeting their individual needs, they still need other people, especially in learning and religious practices, who must be guided.

The definition from Frederickson and Cline above has been accepted and adopted in England or several other developed countries. These countries have almost the same views on what constitutes special needs. The United States federal law states that students with special needs qualify for special services because of their disabilities, which affect their educational performance (Westwood, 2007). Children with special needs have encouraged changes in academic services, which require new collaborative and communicative roles from professionals, especially those related to inclusive classrooms (Wolpert & Ny, 2011). Even though, in reality, it is tough to put into practice, especially

by Islamic religious education teachers, they need better communication and preparation in providing materials and strategies to children with special needs. As in Arianti's research results, PAI teachers generally need special education for the particular school teaching profession, so teachers find explaining and delivering material challenging (Arianti et al., 2023).

Rapp defines *education* as focusing on students with disabilities, and each student also focuses on educational policies and organizations (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021). Inclusion is also described as a program that helps schools adapt to the diversity of children. Children should be placed, accepted, or permitted to participate in a regular school environment, and schools, to the greatest extent possible, should realize overall goals for all student groups (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2021). Children with special needs have the right to receive the benefits of education, especially Islamic education. In this case, the government must be aware of the need to distribute professional human resources in their fields to deal with children with special needs.

Besides, providing equal opportunities for children with disabilities to obtain education and teaching means minimizing the gap in enrollment rates and the education participation rate of normal children with disabilities. (Syarifudin, 2017) The humanistic inclusion education curriculum can be developed through a curriculum modification process that combines the national education curriculum, local content, and the characteristics of children with special needs. (Fitri, 2022). In Research, Fitri at Al-Azhaar Islamic Primary School is one of the educational institutions that has successfully organized inclusive education to improve students' abilities academically and socially in a humanist manner. This research uses qualitative methods of field study and case study. Data collection techniques involve in-depth interviews, participant observations, and documentation studies. The results of this study show that effective inclusive education is designed and implemented by combining normal children with those with special needs. (Fitri, 2022) Thus, adequate facilities and a curriculum that supports and focuses on children with special needs can provide graduate learning outcomes and be implemented in their social lives.

3. Methodology Research

This research uses qualitative research methods with a social approach. Qualitative methods are often called new methods that have not been used for a long time. They are known as post-positivistic methods because they are based on the philosophy of postpositivism. (Sugiyono, 2013) Meanwhile, postpositivism aims to be able to understand an honest, realistic, and complex meaning and construct a phenomenon. (Sitorus, 2016). Researchers used post-positivist qualitative methods because they are relevant to the research object. Researchers provide interpretations of all symptoms, realities, and phenomena in the field.

Data collection techniques in this research are interviews, observation, and documentation. These three techniques are used interactively during the research process in the field continuously until the research period is complete. This research conducted interviews with the principal of the Nur Asih Special School, two teachers, two parents, and the surrounding community. Observations were also made on students during the school's Islamic Religious Education learning process. The observation stage in this research is that the researcher directly observes learning activities using the senses of sight, hearing, and smell. Observations are carried out to obtain detailed data that will be processed and interpreted again.

4. Results and Discussion

The interaction process between Nur Asih school students and the community is harmonious. As stated by Ninda, "I like Rehan, a student from Nur Asih school, because Rehan always greets me and kisses my hand when he meets me on the road to his school." (Interview with Ninda, community). Researchers observed that children with special needs had polite attitudes towards their peers, teachers, and the surrounding community. The surrounding community is very supportive of teaching and learning activities at Nur Asih School, and they do not hesitate to communicate and provide information regarding Islamic learning programs that are taking place in the community.

With Islamic religious education, it is hoped that students will be able to improve their skills and understanding of Islamic religious knowledge based on the Al-Qur'an and Hadith (Ritonga & Nasution, 2023). Increasing knowledge of the Islamic religion is not

only carried out by normal children but also applies to children with special needs. Researchers interviewed Novia, who stated, "Our children are very enthusiastic about learning about Islam, memorizing the Koran, kissing the hands of their guardians, and praying in congregation at the mosque for men " (Novi Interview, 2023).

In the observation, student Amel, who has Down syndrome, helped her friend tie her shoelaces and cover her private parts by putting on a headscarf. Then Amel told Rehan that we have to pray before eating and drinking. In this way, children with special needs can internalize kindness towards each other. They not only understand Islam, but they can improve their life skills in society.

As a communication agent, the community around Nur Asih School has helped children with special needs by teaching and guiding Islamic values. Cultivating honest, polite, friendly, and caring attitudes is assisted and shaped by the local community, who communicate directly with children with special needs. This community's social system significantly influences instilling religious values in students with special needs. Students with special needs can adapt and get used to communicating with the community to achieve a goal (goal).

Specific learning disability (SpLD) is the term applied to approximately three children in every 100 whose difficulties cannot be traced to any lack of intelligence, sensory impairment, cultural or linguistic disadvantage, or inadequate teaching. This disability manifests as a marked discrepancy between intellectual ability and academic achievement (APA 2000). This small group exhibits chronic problems in mastering the basic academic skills of reading, writing, spelling, and mathematics. Some students with SpLD also have problems with social relationships (Pavri 2006), and a few have minor difficulties with physical skills.(P. S. Westwood, 2003)

United States, Canada, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Scandinavia, and much of Europe and Asia. However, in many of these countries, the implementation of inclusive classroom practice is still lagging behind the stated policies – and often, the rhetoric of ‘inclusion’ is far ahead of the reality in schools (DfES 2004a; Rustemier and Vaughn 2005). Some countries have been slow to promote inclusion, partly because teachers and principals were not firmly in favor of teaching children with SEN in the mainstream. Studies have shown that teachers’ attitudes toward inclusion and students with disabilities

have a powerful influence on the success or failure of inclusion (e.g., Skidmore 2004; Ostrosky et al. 2006). In the UK, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES 2004a: 32) states:

Effective inclusion relies on more than specialist skills and resources. It requires positive attitudes toward children with different cultures in school, more excellent responsiveness to individual needs, and, critically, a willingness among all staff to play their part. The leadership of the head teacher is a critical factor in making this happen. For example, a head teacher who actively promotes diversity and inclusivity within the school community by implementing a multicultural curriculum, providing training on cultural competency for staff, and creating a welcoming environment for all students can significantly impact the overall success of inclusion efforts. By fostering a culture of respect and understanding, the head teacher sets the tone for the entire school community to embrace diversity and support all students in their learning journey. However, a counterexample could be a head teacher who needs to prioritize diversity and inclusivity, leading to a lack of multicultural curriculum, insufficient training on cultural competency for staff, and a hostile environment for marginalized students. This lack of leadership can hinder inclusion efforts and create a divisive and unwelcoming school culture that undermines the success of all students. School leaders must prioritize diversity and inclusivity to create a positive and inclusive learning environment for all students.

By actively promoting multicultural education, training on cultural competency, and fostering a culture of acceptance and respect, the head teacher can ensure that all students feel valued and supported. This proactive approach enhances the educational experience for students from diverse backgrounds and promotes a sense of belonging and unity within the school community.

The practical problems surrounding inclusion are most evident in the case of individuals with severe and multiple disabilities or with challenging behavior since many of these students require a high degree of physical care and management over and above their educational needs. By comparison, the inclusion of students with milder forms of disability and with general learning difficulties presents fewer problems. It is believed that regular class teachers can adopt teaching approaches that are more adaptive to the specific needs of such students (Janney and Snell 2004). Regardless of whether a child

with SEN is placed in a mainstream class or a unique setting, the aim is always to address the child's needs through the provision of a broad and balanced education, together with any additional support and unique methods or resources that may be required (DfES 2006a: n.p.).

5. Conclusion

Islamic religious education for children with special needs is critical to improving skills and understanding of the Islamic religion. Children with special needs at Nur Asih school have social skills in society and have an understanding of the Islamic religion. Even though their skills and knowledge are relatively slow compared to normal children their age, they still try to learn and focus on Islamic religious education learning material at school. The inclusive education provided at school can make them feel comfortable and have equal rights in obtaining education. With the surrounding community communicating and providing information, the religious values of children with special needs at the Nur Asih particular school have been formed.

Islamic education for children with special needs must be transmitted as an element of the transfer of values. They can learn the values of Islamic religious education, including tawhid, honesty, politeness, wisdom, justice, and humanism. The role of parents and society as an integrated social system is constructive for children with special needs in improving skills and social socializing skills.

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