

Challenges and Needs of Parents of Students with Special Needs in Inclusive Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the obstacles and needs of parents of students with special needs in inclusive schools. This study used a qualitative approach. The data collection technique used was forum group discussion (FGD). Data analysis was carried out using an interactive analysis model consisting of data condensation, data presentation, and concluding/verification. Data analysis was carried out using ATLAS—ti software. The results showed that the obstacles faced by parents include physical barriers and non-physical obstacles. Non-physical obstacles include administrative obstacles, difficulty accessing information and funds, and lack of human resources. Physical obstacles include a lack of facilities or infrastructure that are affected by the conditions and needs of children. Parental needs consist of bodily needs and non-physical needs. Non-physical issues include the need for transparent sources of information, the need for sufficient human resources, the need for a forum for parents of special needs children, and the need for parenting workshops/seminars. Physical needs include media, learning resources, and worksheets adjusted to the child's abilities. This study is expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers and education practitioners in their efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable educational environment.

Keywords: Challenges, Needs, Parents, Inclusive Schools

INTRODUCTION

Several researchers have stated that inclusive education has proven more effective and benefits students with special needs (Cologon, 2014; Cologon et al., 2019). One of the latest regulations issued by the government is Permendikbudristek Number 48 of 2023, concerning the obligation of formal schools to accommodate and facilitate the needs of students with disabilities. This implies that his policy requires schools to provide appropriate educational services for all students, including students with special needs. Therefore, inclusive schools can also receive the need for learning accommodation. With the support of this policy, the number of students with disabilities who participate in inclusive education increases yearly (Arini, 2020).

Along with the increasing number of schools that accept students with special needs in Indonesia, it is essential to assess the quality of services and implementation of inclusive education received by students with special needs. Several supporting factors influence the implementation of inclusive education practices. These supporting factors include student characteristics, accompanying teachers, teacher awareness and knowledge about inclusive education, and parental involvement (Engevik et al., 2018). This statement indicates that

parents are crucial supporting factors for implementing inclusive education. Many research results reveal that parents have the most vital role in a child's education.

Furthermore, other researchers state that family support is the most significant factor determining student performance (Mutodi & Ngirande, 2014). Several studies have also been conducted to reveal parental attitudes toward children's success in school. Empirical findings have shown a positive relationship between parental involvement in education and academic achievement (Tárraga García et al., 2018), increasing children's self-esteem and their academic performance (Garbacz et al., 2017) as well as retention and attendance at school (Ross, 2016). Research by Lara and Saracostti showed a relationship between student academic achievement and parental involvement (Lara & Saracostti, 2019). In Indonesia, Amka studied parental attitudes toward inclusive education in Elementary Schools (Amka, 2019). The results of the study showed that the attitudes of parents of students with special needs accepted the concept of inclusiveness well. Other studies have found that parental involvement is significantly related to the social skills of students with special needs (Mangunsong & Wahyuni, 2018). Children whose parents have low involvement also have lower academic achievement. This means the higher parental involvement in school, the better the student's learning achievement.

The problem arises when several studies in Indonesia have found low parental involvement in children's education. Rani et al. (2018) found that many parents still do not understand their children well and do not know how to optimize their children's development (Rani et al., 2018). A study conducted in Yogyakarta found that parental involvement is still low in children's education. For example, research conducted by Wardani and Ayriza (2021) found that parents need more time to accompany their children to study because they have to work, and parents are impatient in accompanying their children while studying at home (Wardani & Ayriza, 2020). Parental involvement is essential to children's success in school. The involvement of parents of students with special needs is essential to study, considering the findings of previous studies.

Surakarta City, as an inclusive city, is committed to the fact that every school can accept students with special needs. In the Regional Regulation of Surakarta City Number 9 of 2020 concerning the Protection and Fulfillment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it is stated that the Regional Government organizes and facilitates education for Persons with Disabilities in every path, type, and level of education according to its authority. Seeing the strong commitment of the city of Surakarta and the importance of the role of parents in the success of inclusive education, this study aimed to explore in depth the obstacles and needs of parents of students with special needs in inclusive schools. This article is expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, academics, and education practitioners in their efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable educational environment for students with special needs.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a broad approach to studying social phenomena in natural rather than controlled settings. The focus of this study was the challenges and needs of parents of special needs students in inclusive schools. Research on parents in schools does not only use parents as data sources but also teachers and other staff at school. Therefore, the data sources in this study were parents of students with special needs and special education teachers. The data collection technique

used was the forum group discussion (FGD), divided into two groups: the parent group FGD and the teacher group FGD. The purpose of dividing the groups was to obtain more objective data.

The researcher acted as the main instrument in the study. However, researchers still used instruments as guides. Researchers still used guide instruments prepared by the team that were broadly related to the barriers and needs of parents in schools. In this study, triangulation was carried out using triangulating sources. Triangulation of sources was carried out by comparing FGD results from parents and class teachers/special assistant teachers.

The steps in data analysis were carried out by following an interactive analysis model consisting of three components: data condensation, data presentation, and concluding/verification. Researchers collected transcription results and documents to be imported into the ATLAS—ti version 9 application for the subsequent analysis stage. Data analysis was carried out with the help of ATLAS—ti qualitative data analysis software. ATLAS.ti is software that assists the qualitative data analysis process, including coding, data organization, and categorization. The data presentation in this study was carried out narratively and accompanied by visual data in the form of network diagrams and Sankey diagrams. The objective of these diagrams was to organize and visualize the data better. Thus, researchers would make better interpretations and draw better conclusions according to the data display.

RESULT

Children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder have problems with inattention, especially at school age. This causes children to have difficulty focusing their attention, tend to get bored quickly, have difficulty doing their tasks and activities, often lose items such as (stationery pencils, books, and toys) and their attention is easily distracted by external stimuli and in the long term can affect the ability of academic achievement which decreases (Colomer et al., 2017).

This study focused on the challenges and needs of parents of students with special needs in inclusive schools. The codes that emerged during the data analysis were processed using the ATLAS to produce code groups and categories/themes. The themes that emerged included parental barriers and parental needs. The following is a network diagram generated by the ATLAS—ti application.

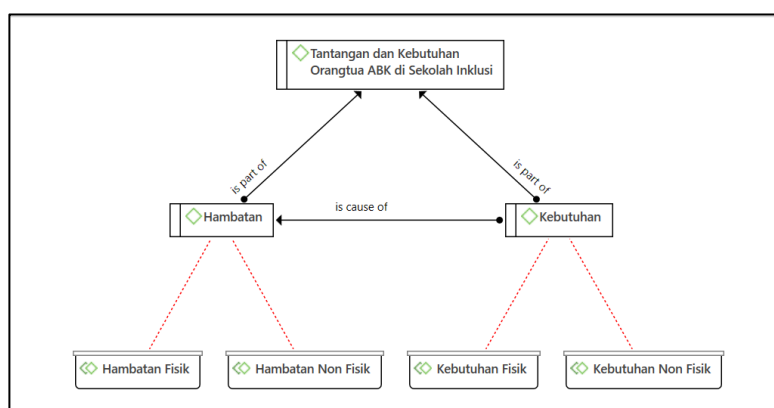


Figure 1. Network Coding Results using the ATLAS.ti application

In addition to using network diagrams, data visualization was also used to see how often the code appears. Therefore, a Sankey diagram was used to help visualize the data as follows:

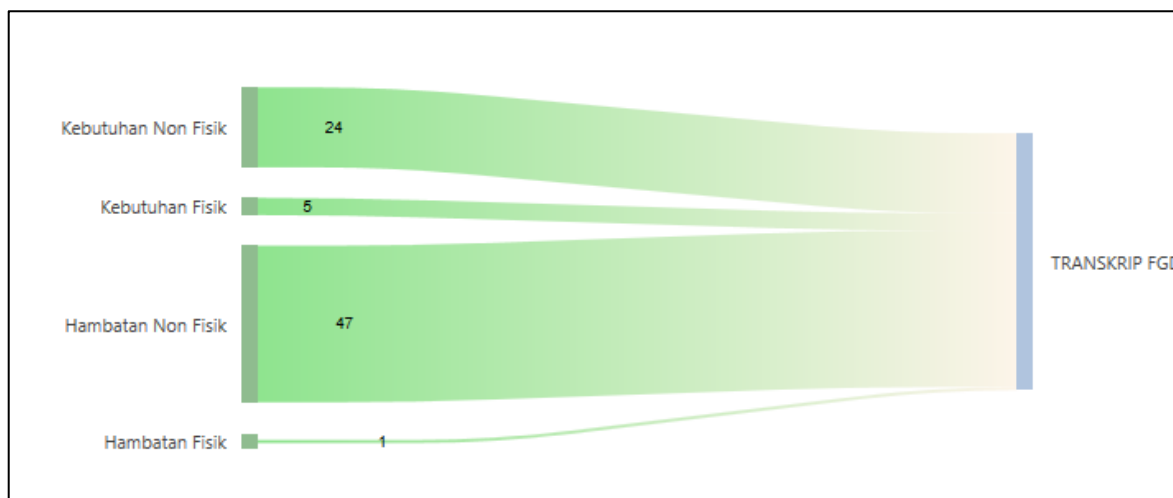


Figure 2. Sankey diagram using ATLAS.ti application

Parental Barriers

Based on the results of data analysis, the code groups that emerged in the theme of barriers included physical and non-physical barriers. Non-physical barriers appeared more often than physical barriers. Non-physical barriers consisted of several codes, including administrative barriers, difficulty accessing information, lack of funds, lack of human resources, and time constraints. Parents said that they had difficulty getting services for child assessments. This was conveyed by one parent who said he had registered but was not called by the assessment committee because they had to wait too long for the queue quota. Several parents also expressed obstacles in getting information. For example, one parent said they had difficulty getting information about what kind of support they could do at home.

Non-physical barriers appeared less frequently. Physical barriers were more related to the lack of facilities or infrastructure needed to meet the child's condition and needs. For example, one parent said he had difficulty finding learning resources appropriate for his child's cognitive level.

Parental Needs

Based on the results of the data analysis, the theme of parental needs also emerged. This theme emerged as a result of the obstacles that parents have in assisting their children in inclusive schools. The code groups that emerged in the needs theme included physical and non-physical needs. Non-physical needs emerged more than physical needs. The codes that emerged in non-physical needs included the need for transparent sources of information, sufficient human resources, a forum for parents of children with special needs, and parenting workshops/seminars. Several parents expressed that they needed a parenting workshop on understanding the conditions and ways that parents can assist their children in studying at home. Several private schools have implemented this program. However, public schools have not implemented this program for parents. Therefore, parents

of students with special needs in inclusive schools tend to need help getting information on how to help their children study.

Physical needs emerged less, including the need for media, learning resources, and worksheets adjusted to the child's abilities. One parent of a student revealed that the school only provided the same worksheets for all students in the class. Their child needed modifications to suit his or her ability level. Several teachers also admitted that they had difficulty modifying learning for students with special needs only due to limited human resources and a lack of budget from the school.

DISCUSSION

Based on the presentation of the research results, non-physical barriers appeared more often than non-physical barriers. Non-physical barriers consisted of several codes, including administrative barriers, difficulty in accessing information, lack of funds, lack of human resources, and time constraints. The study results showed that some parents needed help getting information regarding the kind of support they could implement at home. This finding aligns with a study conducted by Ujianti (2018), which stated that many parents, especially those from the lower middle class, lack information (Ujianti, 2018). Parents even need to get information about their child's learning process at school and the achievements their child has made at school (Gartmeier et al., 2016; Kraft & Rogers, 2015). This information can be complex due to a lack of communication between teachers and parents (Fatma et al., 2016). Good communication will positively impact teachers, parents, and children's performance at school (Dor, 2019).

Physical barriers were more related to the lack of facilities or infrastructure that did not match the conditions and needs of the child. For example, one parent expressed difficulty finding learning resources matching their child's cognitive level. This finding is by the results of previous studies that showed there had been no modification in adaptive learning; learning plans were only made for regular students, therefore students with special needs had difficulty following the learning process (Taryatman & Rahim, 2018). It was further explained that students with special needs did not follow the learning and only played alone while the teacher and other students were carrying out the learning. Haegele and Sutherland also revealed similar findings, who stated that teachers ignored students' needs and urged that all students must master the curriculum (Haegele & Sutherland, 2015). This is in line with the findings of previous researchers who stated that teachers did not make individual learning programs due to human resources problems (Agustina, 2017).

Based on the results of the data analysis, the theme of parental needs emerged due to the obstacles that parents have in assisting their children in inclusive schools. Non-physical needs emerged more, including the need for transparent sources of information, sufficient human resources, a forum for parents of children with special needs, and parenting workshops/seminars. The results of this study align with the opinion of previous researchers who explained that parents need sources of information related to their children and support groups consisting of parents of students with special needs to exchange information, discuss, and support their children's development (Ujianti, 2018). It is also important to remember that parents caring for children with special needs must have the knowledge and much educational information and development skills (Kaye et al., 2021). Dissemination of information to parents on how to teach their children effectively and

efficiently through direct assistance between teachers and parents or even between parents through face-to-face seminars and workshops (Kaye et al., 2021).

The needs of parents in physical form include the need for media, learning resources, and worksheets that are adjusted to the child's abilities. One of the parents of the students revealed that the school only gave the same worksheets to all students in the class. This is by the opinion of previous research, which showed results where there had been no modification in learning; learning plans were only made for regular students so that students with special needs needed help to follow the learning (Taryatman & Rahim, 2018). Haegele and Sutherland also expressed the same findings, who said that teachers ignored students' needs and urged that all students must master the curriculum (Haegele & Sutherland, 2015). These findings are also by the results of other studies, which stated that teachers did not make individualized education programs due to human resources problems (Agustina, 2017). Therefore, parents need learning resources and media that are adjusted to the level of ability and condition of their children.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the challenges and needs of parents of students with special needs in inclusive schools. The results of the study showed that the obstacles faced by parents include physical obstacles and non-physical obstacles. Non-physical obstacles appeared more often than physical obstacles. Non-physical obstacles consisted of several codes, including administrative obstacles, difficulty accessing information, lack of funds, lack of human resources, and time constraints. Non-physical obstacles appear less frequently. Physical obstacles were more about the lack of facilities or infrastructure that were not to the conditions and needs of the child. The need for parents to assist their children in inclusive schools arises from these obstacles. The themes of needs included physical needs and non-physical needs. Non-physical needs appeared more frequently than physical needs. The codes that appeared in non-physical needs included the need for transparent sources of information, sufficient human resources, a forum for parents of special needs, and parenting workshops/seminars. Physical needs appeared less frequently, including the need for media, learning resources, and worksheets adjusted to the child's abilities. This article is expected to provide valuable insights for policymakers, academics, and education practitioners in their efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable educational environment for students with special needs.

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