

Parental Involvement in the Implementation of Inclusive Early Childhood Education Programs in Ngawi Regency

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education at the PAUD level has a crucial role in creating a learning environment that is accessible to all children, without exception, including children with special needs. This study aims to provide insight and recommendations on parental involvement in the implementation of inclusive ECE programs in Ngawi Regency. The research method used is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The subjects in this study were early childhood education teachers and parents with different institutions in 19 Districts in Ngawi Regency, East Java. The research data collection techniques are through observation, interviews, documentation, and open questionnaires. The data analysis techniques used in this study are the data reduction stage, the data presentation stage, and the conclusion or verification stage. The results of this study indicate that parental involvement in the implementation of inclusive ECE programs is still low. Factors that influence this are economic and time constraints, lack of knowledge and information about inclusion, social stigma against children with special needs, and limited inclusive education facilities. With this research, it is hoped that parental involvement can run optimally in inclusive programs.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive early childhood education (ECE) has an important role in supporting the development of children, both those with special needs and those without. Inclusive ECE aims to create a learning environment that allows all children, regardless of their physical or mental condition, to develop optimally (Wulandari & Fatimah, 2023). In this context, inclusive education not only provides equal opportunities for children with disabilities to attend school, but also prioritizes the principles of diversity, respect for differences, and teaches the values of mutual respect between individuals (Mustika et al., 2023). Therefore, inclusive education

in ECE is expected to create greater opportunities for children to interact, adapt, and develop together in a supportive atmosphere (Fitriani, Kurniati, Yusuf, & Mildasari, 2024).

However, even though there is a policy and regulatory framework that supports the implementation of inclusive ECE, in reality this program still faces various significant challenges. (Nurhayati & Lahagu, 2024). Many ECE educational institutions have not been able to fully implement the principles of inclusion properly, either due to limited facilities, the quality of teaching staff, or a curriculum that has not been fully adapted to the needs of children with special needs. (Fadil, Amran, & Alfaien, 2023).

Based on data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, there are currently 6,764 Special Schools (SLB) serving educational levels from kindergarten to high school. On the other hand, the number of inclusive schools in 2023 was recorded at 44,477, which shows a significant increase compared to the previous year which only reached 40,928 schools. The implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia is in accordance with the provisions of Law Number 8 of 2016 Article 10, which guarantees the rights of persons with disabilities to obtain quality education in various educational units, both in inclusive and special pathways, at various levels of education (Latifah & Fadila, 2024). Although more and more ECE institutions are adopting the principle of inclusion, the percentage of children with disabilities who have access to appropriate education is very low. This shows a gap between the ideals of inclusive education and the reality on the ground.

One of the main factors influencing the low quality of inclusive ECE implementation is the lack of parental involvement in supporting their children's education (Simamora, Hayati, Abni, Asmendri, & Sari, 2023). Parental involvement is a very important element in the success of a child's education, including in inclusive education (Riyadi et al., 2023). Parents who are actively involved in their children's educational activities can provide much-needed emotional and social support, as well as facilitate the development of a more inclusive and child-centred curriculum (Hanifa & Ramadhan, 2024). In addition, parental involvement can also help create better relationships between school and home, which will ultimately strengthen the learning process (Irwan, Nuryani, & Masruddin, 2023).

In this context, Bronfenbrenner's theory in the study (Dharma, 2022) on the Ecology of Human Development can be used to explain the importance of the family environment in child development. According to this theory, child development is not only influenced by internal factors, but also by various external environmental systems, such as family, school, and society. The family, as one of the main components in this system, has a very important role in supporting the child's education process, especially in inclusive education. Without parental involvement, children will lose one of the most essential sources of support in overcoming the challenges they face

In addition, Vygotsky's theory in research (Judijanto et al., 2024; Septiana et al., 2023) on social learning and interaction also provides a strong foundation for understanding the role of parents in inclusive education. Vygotsky suggested that children's cognitive development is greatly influenced by social interactions with other individuals, including parents. In the context of inclusive education, parental involvement will enrich the learning experiences of children, especially those with special needs, by providing opportunities for more intensive interaction outside the classroom. Therefore, the lack of parental involvement in inclusive education can reduce the quality of social interactions that are important for child development.

However, based on field observations, many parents are less involved in the process of implementing inclusive ECE. Several factors that cause low parental involvement include a lack of parental understanding of the importance of inclusive education, limited time due to busy work, and a lack of information or effective communication between parents and educational institutions. Most parents may not realize the importance of their contribution

in supporting their children's inclusive education, especially when they do not see the direct impact of their participation in the program.

The hypothesis proposed in this study is that low parental involvement contributes greatly to the ineffectiveness of implementing inclusive ECE. Without active support from parents, the implementation of inclusive education will be limited, and children with special needs may not receive adequate attention and facilities for their development. This study aims to identify factors that hinder parental involvement in inclusive ECE and analyze the impact of low parental involvement on the quality of inclusive education received by children.

2. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method. Data collection was carried out by referring to Patton's theory (Patton, 2014) which states various techniques in qualitative research, such as interviews, observations, and open-ended questionnaires. Although interviews and observations are the main focus, Patton also acknowledges that questionnaires can be used in qualitative research, especially to explore data related to perceptions or experiences in a more structured way. The emphasis in the qualitative approach is flexibility, so that questionnaires can be applied to collect data from many respondents or to complement information obtained through interviews. The subjects of this study were ECE teachers from various institutions in 19 sub-districts in Ngawi Regency, East Java. The data analysis techniques used include three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

Table 1. Research Findings

No.	Dsitriect	School	Description
1.	Bringin	KB Tunas Bangsa	Parents have not played an active role in inclusion programs, due to time constraints, as well as a lack of information and counseling on inclusion programs.
2.	Geneng	ECE IT Anggrek	Parents are actively involved and supportive in school programs, including the implementation of inclusion.
3.	Gerih	TK PKK Guyung	Parents are not yet involved in school programs, especially inclusion programs, due to limited knowledge about inclusion.
4.	Jogorogo	TK Dharma Wanita Macanan 1	Parents have been involved and played a role in implementing inclusion in this institution.
5.	Karangjati	KB Hidayatul Athfal	Parents are not yet involved, so inclusive education is needed for teachers, parents, and the community.
6.	Karanganyar	TK Dharma Wanita Karanganyar 2	Parents are not yet involved, but very minimal in their participation in the implementation of ECE in all school programs.
7.	Kedunggalar	RA AL Murtadho	Parents have not been involved in the implementation of inclusive programs, because

			they do not understand inclusive education and there has been no socialization about inclusion.
8.	Kendal	ECE Anggrek	Parents have not been involved in inclusion programs, due to time constraints and minimal inclusion education.
9.	Kwadungan	TK Dharma Wanita Pojok	Parents are not yet involved, due to low parental participation.
10.	Kasreman	TK Dharma Wanita Karangmalang	Parents are very helpful and able to work together with the school, in the inclusion program.
11.	Mantingan	Tk Dharma Wanita Pengkol 1	Parents are less involved in inclusive education due to the lack of time parents have with their children who are divided between work.
12.	Ngawi	TK At-Taqwa Ketanggi	Parents have not been involved in the implementation of inclusion programs, because they do not understand inclusive education, as well as the stigma in society that children with special needs cannot be in the same class as regular children.
13.	Ngrambe	TK Aisyiyah Wakah	The role of parents is not yet optimal in inclusion programs both at school and at home, so socialization is needed for the implementation of inclusion.
14.	Padas	TK Dahlia	Parents have not been involved in the implementation of the inclusion program, because there has been no socialization or training on the inclusion program, in addition to the fact that the inclusion facilities owned by the institution are not yet optimal.
15.	Pangkur	TK Dharma wanita Ngompro 2	Orang tua cukup terlibat dalam program inklusi serta mendukung penyelenggaraan inklusi di lembaga ini.
16.	Paron	TK Muslimat NU Nawa Kartika XLIV Kedungputri	Because institutions have not implemented inclusion, parents have not been involved, and do not understand the need to organize inclusive education.
17.	Pitu	RA AL Hidayah Ngancar	Parents are not yet involved, because inclusion programs are not evenly distributed across ECE institutions.
18.	Sine	RA AL Islam Gendol	Parents still do not participate in all the programs held at this institution.
19.	Widodaren	TK Islamic Jannah	Parents are quite involved, but not optimally.

The Based on the research findings above, parental involvement in the implementation of inclusive ECE programs is still low. In this finding, out of 19 institutions, 3 ECE institutions stated that parents have played an active role and are involved in all programs at school, 2 ECE institutions stated that parents are quite involved, but not yet optimally in the inclusion program, and 14 ECE institutions stated that parents have not been involved in the inclusion

program, due to several things such as economic and time constraints, lack of knowledge and socialization of inclusion, social stigma against children with special needs, and limited inclusion facilities.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of inclusive Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs in Ngawi Regency faces various challenges, one of which is the economic and time constraints experienced by parents (Suwarsih & Nirmala, n.d.). Many parents work full time and must prioritize the family's economic needs, making it difficult to take time to be involved in school activities or support children's education at home (Lukitasari, Sulasmono, & Iriani, 2017). These limitations reduce parents' opportunities to interact with teachers or participate in school activities, which ultimately affects their level of involvement in inclusive education.

Time constraints are one of the factors inhibiting parental participation in inclusive education (Tugiah & Trisoni, 2022). Most parents in Ngawi work outside the home or have long working hours, so they cannot attend activities held at school, such as parent meetings, seminars, or guidance. The inability of parents to actively participate in these activities has an impact on low support for the child's learning process. In fact, in inclusive education, parental involvement is very important, both in monitoring the child's development and providing the necessary psychological support (Kinda & Ramadhani, 2023). Without this involvement, children with special needs tend to lack the motivation and support they need to develop optimally (Amelasasih, 2018).

In addition to economic and time constraints, lack of knowledge and socialization about the concept of inclusive education also hinders parental involvement in inclusive ECE programs (Lukitasari et al., 2017). Many parents do not fully understand what inclusive education is, and how it impacts the development of children with special needs (Pratiwi, Maghfiroh, Andika, Marcela, & Afifah, 2022). They often only know regular education and are worried if their children are placed in inclusive schools, because they do not know how the system can support their children (Yasa & Julianto, 2018). The lack of socialization regarding the benefits and objectives of inclusive education worsens the public's perception of more inclusive education (Romadhon, Miarsah, & Rodhli, 2024). Without proper understanding, parents tend not to believe that inclusive education can provide beneficial learning experiences for their children (Jesslin & Kurniawati, 2020).

In addition, low socialization also causes a lack of information available to parents regarding the rights of children with special needs in inclusive schools. Many parents do not know that inclusive ECE is actually designed to support the diversity of children's needs, be it children with physical, mental, or developmental disabilities (Dini, 2022). The limited socialization program in Ngawi Regency makes many parents feel anxious and reluctant to enroll their children in inclusive ECE, because they do not understand how the program works and how their children will be accepted. Therefore, it is very important to carry out more intensive education and counseling programs for the community, especially parents, so that they can understand the importance of inclusive education for children with special needs (Husna et al., 2021).

Social stigma against children with special needs is also a significant problem that hinders parental involvement in inclusive education (Fitriani et al., 2024). In many areas, including Ngawi Regency, there are still negative views towards children with disabilities. Children with special needs are often considered unable to attend school or achieve as well as other children. This stigma affects the perception of parents, who may feel embarrassed or worried if their children are enrolled in inclusive ECE. Some parents even avoid inclusive schools for fear that their children will be the subject of conversation or ridiculed by their friends (Halidu, 2022). This social stigma exacerbates parents' fears and causes them to

choose not to involve their children in inclusive education, even though they actually know that the child deserves a decent education (Jesslin & Kurniawati, 2020).

In addition, the existing social stigma can also prevent children with special needs from interacting socially with their peers (Riana, Hanurawan, & Sa'dijah, 2021). An unsupportive environment can worsen the psychological condition of children with special needs, because they feel isolated and not accepted in their social environment (Aini & Harsiwi, 2024). Therefore, it is important for society to be more open and accepting of children with special needs, as well as educating them about the importance of social inclusion (Martha & Suryana, 2019). By reducing this stigma, parents will feel more comfortable enrolling their children in inclusive ECE and provide greater support for their children's education (Nilamsari, 2018).

Finally, the limited inclusive facilities in Ngawi Regency are also a major obstacle in the implementation of the inclusive ECE program. Many schools still do not have adequate facilities to support children with special needs (Atika, 2024). For example, classrooms that are not friendly for children with physical disabilities, limited learning aids, or the absence of educators who are specially trained to handle the needs of children with disabilities (Rosita, Rochyadi, & Sunardi, 2020). Without adequate facilities, children with special needs cannot participate in the learning process optimally, which ultimately impacts the quality of education they receive (Maria, Purnomo, & Abdurrahmansyah, 2023). This condition causes many parents to feel that inclusive ECE in Ngawi Regency is not ready to provide proper education for their children, so they tend not to enroll their children in this program.

Limited facilities also make it difficult for educators to provide special attention to children with special needs (Widiastuti & Winaya, 2019). Without adequate training and supporting tools, educators have difficulty designing a curriculum that can accommodate the individual needs of each child (Safitri & Fatmawati, 2024). This worsens the quality of existing inclusive education and makes parents feel less confident about the program. In addition, the lack of cooperation between schools and local governments in improving inclusive education facilities also worsens this situation (Pratiwi et al., 2022). Therefore, greater efforts are needed to improve inclusive education facilities in Ngawi Regency, so that this program can run more effectively and provide maximum benefits for children with special needs.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that parental involvement in the implementation of inclusive ECE programs in Ngawi Regency still faces various significant obstacles. Economic and time constraints are the main factors that prevent parents from being actively involved in their children's education, especially in activities that support inclusive education. In addition, the lack of understanding and socialization of inclusive education makes many parents feel worried and reluctant to enroll their children in inclusive schools. The social stigma against children with special needs also exacerbates parents' fears of discrimination, while limited facilities in schools also worsen the quality of inclusive education received by children with special needs.

5. RECOMMENDATION

To overcome these problems, it is necessary to increase parents' understanding of the concept of inclusive education through more intensive and comprehensive socialization programs. The government and schools need to work together in organizing seminars, training, and activities that involve parents so that they have more confidence and support

inclusive education. In addition, it is important to reduce the social stigma against children with special needs by increasing public awareness of the diversity of children's needs, as well as educating them about the importance of social inclusion in the surrounding environment. Improving inclusive education facilities is also an important priority. Local governments and schools must ensure that existing facilities can support the needs of children with disabilities, both in terms of physical facilities and human resources. Training for educators and providing appropriate assistive devices will improve the quality of inclusive education, so that parents feel more confident and comfortable sending their children to inclusive ECE. With these steps, it is hoped that the inclusive ECE program in Ngawi Regency can run more effectively and provide maximum benefits for the development of children with special needs.

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