

## **The Limitations of Teachers in Handling Children with Special Needs in TK Wijaya Kusuma**

**<sup>1</sup>Shinta Aurelia Iskanadar, <sup>2</sup>Fina Lestari, <sup>3</sup>Mariani Astuti, <sup>4</sup>Puspita Ayu Nirmala**

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>Universitas Mulawarman, Indonesia

Corresponding E-Mail: shintaurelia2203@gmail.com

### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the constraints experienced by teachers in managing Children with Special Needs (CSN) at TK Wijaya Kusuma, Samarinda. The research focuses on teachers' capacity to instruct CSN, the availability of facilities and learning media, and the school's support for inclusive education practices. A descriptive qualitative method was employed through observation, interviews, and documentation studies involving teachers and the principal. The results highlight four major constraints: lack of teacher training in inclusive education, limited availability of adaptive learning tools, an unfavorable teacher-student ratio, and minimal institutional and external support. Despite high dedication and empathy from the teachers, the lack of technical expertise prevents optimal learning delivery. This study recommends continuous teacher training, provision of CSN-friendly Educational Play Tools (APE), and collaboration with psychologists and therapists to ensure ECE services are more inclusive and equitable for all children.

**Keywords:** *ECE Teacher; Children with Special-Needs; Inclusive Education; TK Wijaya Kusuma.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Inclusive education ensures that all children, including those with special needs, receive learning opportunities commensurate with their abilities. In the Early Childhood Education (ECE) setting, this approach is vital, as early childhood represents a critical window for establishing fundamental character, social, and cognitive capabilities (the golden age). The government has institutionalized this commitment through policies such as Permendiknas No. 70 of 2009 and Permendikbud No. 137 of 2014, supporting inclusive education services.

However, many ECE institutions still struggle to implement inclusive education effectively. According to a World Bank report (2021), approximately 68% of ECE teachers have never received training to handle CSN. TK Wijaya Kusuma in Samarinda represents an institution facing this reality. While teachers possess high motivation to support CSN, they encounter significant difficulties due to limited pedagogical competence, inadequate learning media, and the absence of professional support personnel, such as psychologists or special education teachers.

This condition is crucial to investigate as it illustrates the practical challenges faced by ECE teachers in realizing a child-friendly and inclusive educational environment. This research aims to analyze the specific limitations of teachers in handling CSN, identify the underlying causative factors, and propose

recommendations to enhance the quality of inclusive education services at the ECE level.

## **METHODS**

### **Subjects of Research**

This research employed a descriptive qualitative method aimed at providing a rich, in-depth characterization of the teaching experiences of educators instructing Children with Special Needs (CSN). The study was conducted at TK Wijaya Kusuma, Samarinda. The participants were selected through purposive sampling and included the school principal and three teachers who are actively involved in instructing children with specific diagnoses, namely mild autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and speech delay. These participants were chosen based on their direct and crucial experience in managing inclusive early childhood education, ensuring the collection of relevant and nuanced data.

### **Instruments and Interview Questions**

Data were collected using a strategy of triangulation, employing three primary instruments to ensure the depth and validity of the findings: (1) Observation Sheets: Used for conducting direct observation of the learning process to record the actual interactions, specific teaching strategies employed by the teachers, and the engagement of the CSN students in the classroom environment. (2) Semi-Structured Interview Guide: Developed to facilitate in-depth interviews with the principal and the selected teachers. The guide focused on eliciting detailed narratives concerning their experiences, pedagogical challenges, differentiated instructional strategies, and their collaboration in managing the needs of CSN students. And (3) Documentation: This instrument involved collecting relevant institutional documents, such as Weekly Activity Plans (RPPH), administrative records, and child development notes/portfolios, which served to corroborate the information gathered through interviews and observation.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection proceeded by systematically utilizing the three instruments in the field. The semi-structured interviews provided the core qualitative narratives, the observations provided contextual evidence of classroom practices, and the documentation offered official institutional data.

The data analysis adopted the cyclical model proposed by Miles and Huberman (2020) which encompasses three concurrent stages: (1) Data Reduction: This involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting the vast body of raw data (interview transcripts, field notes, documents) to retain only information relevant to the teachers' experiences and instructional strategies for CSN. (2) Data Display: The reduced data were then organized and presented in a coherent, descriptive

narrative form, facilitating the identification of emerging themes and patterns related to teaching experiences, challenges, and management practices for children with mild autism, ADHD, and speech delay. And (3) Conclusion Drawing or Verification: The final stage involved interpreting the displayed data, drawing conclusions, and verifying the findings through a continuous process of checking against the original data.

The trustworthiness of the findings was rigorously enhanced through two main techniques: triangulation of sources (comparing data from the principal, teachers, and documents) and triangulation of methods (comparing data from interviews, observation, and documentation). Furthermore, the conclusions were subject to confirmation with the informants (member checking) to ensure the findings accurately and authentically reflected the reality on the ground at TK Wijaya Kusuma.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

TK Wijaya Kusuma enrolls approximately 12 students, including nine CSN with diverse needs such as mild autism, ADHD, and speech delay. The school is equipped with five thematic learning rooms, an outdoor play area, and several teacher-made Educational Play Tools (APE). Crucially, the school lacks a specialized sensory room or specific teaching aids like visual schedules and behavior boards for CSN. The principal stated, "The school strives to adapt activities so all students can participate, but we do not yet have a special needs assistant teacher or therapeutic aids."

While teachers at TK Wijaya Kusuma display high levels of empathy and commitment, they lack competence in differentiated instruction necessary for CSN. Most teachers have not attended formal training on inclusive education. They often struggle to manage hyperactive behaviors and align learning targets for children with speech delays. This finding supports research by Hata (2023) and Sulistyaningsih (2025), which suggests that ECE teachers tend to rely on personal experience rather than scientific, evidence-based approaches when dealing with CSN.

The school suffers from a shortage of specialized facilities, such as therapy rooms, sensory equipment, or visual media essential for children with autism and communication disorders. The available APE is general and not customized to the individual needs of each child. Teachers take the initiative to create simple learning media using materials like paper, recycled bottles, and felt fabric, but the effectiveness of these self-made tools is limited. According to the World Bank (2021), inadequate facilities can lead to overstimulation in children with autism and trigger frustration among teachers.

Teachers lack easy access to specialized experts such as psychologists, speech therapists, or counselors. The school relies on informal communication with parents and the nearest community health post (Posyandu). Furthermore, no dedicated funds are available for continuous teacher training or the procurement of adaptive aids for CSN. Hasanah (2025) highlights that the success of inclusive education in ECE hinges significantly on institutional support, including internal policies, external collaboration, and sustained oversight. Without this structural support, professional development for teachers remains severely hampered.

The limitations faced by teachers directly influence the effectiveness of learning for CSN: (1) Children with autism tend to spend more time isolated and participate less in group activities. (2) Hyperactive children find it difficult to follow instructions because teachers lack effective behavioral strategies. And (3) Children with speech delays require significantly longer periods to comprehend instructions. future.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings, it is concluded that teachers at TK Wijaya Kusuma still face significant limitations in handling CSN, spanning competency, facilities, and institutional support. These constraints stem from a lack of formal training, the absence of adaptive learning aids, and the failure to establish effective cross-sector collaboration. Despite these difficulties, the teachers demonstrate high commitment and creativity in implementing inclusive practices. Therefore, sustainable strategies are required to enhance teacher capacity through targeted training, strengthening partnerships, and planned resource management to achieve optimal inclusive education services.

## **REFERENCES**

- Hasanah, F. N. (2025). Strategi dan Tantangan dalam Menerapkan Pembelajaran Inklusif di PAUD. *Jurnal Edukasi dan Riset*, 9(1), 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.31004/jer.v9i1.621>.
- Hata, A. (2023). Inclusive Early Childhood Education for Children with Disabilities. UNICEF Indonesia Report.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (2020). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. Sage Publications.
- Safitri, M. (2025). Implementasi Manajemen Penyelenggaraan PAUD: Studi Kualitatif di TK Tulabul Ilmi Kota Samarinda. *AULAD: Journal on Early Childhood*, 8(1), 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.31004/aulad.v8i1.832>.
- Sheehy, K. (2024). Towards Inclusive Practice in Indonesian Kindergartens. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(2), 121–135.
- Sulistiyarningsih, R. (2025). Improving the Skills of Implementing Inclusive Education at

4<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Islamic Education and Language (AICIEL) 2025  
*“Transforming Islamic Higher Education through Innovation and Research for Sustainable Development”*

Early Childhood. *Journal of Education Research*, 12(3), 155–167.  
<https://doi.org/10.31004/jer.v12i3.771>.

World Bank. (2021). *Embracing Diversity and Inclusion in Indonesian Schools: Challenges and Policy Options*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

