PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (A CASE STUDY AT ELMAFAZA INCLUSIVE SCHOOL)

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Abstract. Parental involvement in the educational process has a positive significance for educational outcomes, including in the educational process in inclusive schools. Understanding the forms of parental involvement in the inclusive school education process will help provide the best way for children with special needs in their educational success. The purpose of this study was to analyze the form of parental involvement in the education of children with special needs in inclusive schools. The research uses a qualitative approach. Data was collected by interview, documentation, and observation methods. The interactive qualitative analysis technique of the Miles and Huberman model which consists of data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing is used in the research. The results showed that there are various forms of parental involvement, including acting as models of behaviour, ethics, and independence (parental modelling), giving reinforcement when a willingness to learn appears in children (parental reinforcement), and giving encouragement/stimulant so that children's cognitive abilities develop (parental encouragement). Parental involvement can foster internal motivation and self-regulation strategies in children.

Keywords: Parental involvement, children with special needs, inclusive schools

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the basic human needs that impacts the quality of a country's human resources. Article 31 of the 1945 Constitution states that education is a right for every citizen. UNESCO states that the state must respect, protect and fulfil the right of all learners to education [1]. In the Indonesian context, all people who are Indonesian citizens have the same rights in education, including children with special needs (CwSN). Currently, the government encourages the provision of inclusive education services that are integrated with regular education. This aims to meet the educational service needs of CwSN. The role of inclusive schools is huge, especially in establishing relationships between normal students and CwSN students. The relationship between children can be healthier and reduce forms of bullying or exclusion, as well as familiarize mutual respect and understanding of each other [2]. Inclusive schools must facilitate all children regardless of physical, intellectual, social-emotional, linguistic or other conditions [3]. Inclusive education carries the mission of education for all by targeting individuals who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion [4]. Inclusive schools in practice involve all elements, especially teachers and all school members. Each of these elements has a role in creating a conducive atmosphere. In addition, parents have an important role in supporting this. Parental involvement is currently a major focus in the education reform movement and its impact has been

recognized by many education professionals and policymakers [5].

Research studies show parental involvement is important to encourage children in the development of their academic and social-emotional competencies in early and late childhood [6]. Parents are the first educators of children in terms of literacy especially when children enter the school world [7]. The success of children after being in the school world is inseparable from the role of parents. However, the reality is that most parents do not fully realize the importance of their role in education, especially for CwSN. Parents tend to think that education for CwSN is not that important. This may be due to the parents' low level of education or because they see CwSN in their family as a disgrace. Worse, some parents deliberately do not care about the education of their CwSN. Parents should have unconditional respect for their dignity [8]. Therefore, early efforts are needed to involve parents in their children's education through sharing and discussing knowledge with child education experts. increasing parental confidence, helping to build social networks between parents, observing appropriate behavioural role models and providing a positive home learning environment [9]. In connection with this, schools need to create parenting programs that involve parents so that they can work together in educating children [10]. Parental involvement has a positive effect on their children's character development [11]. Small efforts in the form of reading books together and interacting with children is one form of parental



involvement that has an impact on children's achievement [12]. In the case of CwSN, previous research findings suggest that achievement motivation and academic achievement are also influenced by parental involvement [13]. From the point of view of teachers at school, parental involvement is necessary for the learning process to be effective [14]. Meanwhile, from the student's perspective, their perceived parental involvement has positive significance as a predictor of academic motivation in vocational education and training [15]. In addition, students recognize various forms of parental involvement as a major factor in their success at school. Parental involvement in the education of CwSN can be improved through programs created by schools so that parents and schools become synergistic [10]. All components influence the implementation of inclusive education in the school ecological system. Parental involvement for all children is a priority so schools can encourage this by organizing various activities that encourage parental involvement such as collaboration forums between teachers and parents and providing resources that parents can use at home to meet the needs of their children [16]. Thus, parental involvement plays an important role in the education process, including the education process in inclusive schools. In this regard, previous studies have revealed that parental involvement is very important in the education process of CwSN. Many highly educated parents devote more time to communicating with their children than parents with lower levels of education [17]. Meanwhile, parents of CwSN encourage their children to join regular classes because they feel it can develop their children's social skills [18]. Other research suggests that parental involvement is an integral component of a high-quality inclusive school program that can sustain good learning outcomes [19]. Meanwhile, a study suggested that similar research needs to be conducted by extracting qualitative data from parents' perspectives [20]. The suggested qualitative research should consider parents' backgrounds and children's specific characteristics. Therefore, this study needs to be conducted to analyze the forms of parental involvement in the education of CwSN in inclusive schools.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study is qualitative research with a case study approach. The main procedure of case studies involves purposeful sampling (to select cases that are considered important) which in this study, is the involvement of parents in the education of CwSN [21]. The research was conducted at Elmafaza Klaten inclusive school in May-June 2023. Subjects and informants in the study were taken based on a purposive sampling technique, namely four parents of CwSN with different socio-economic backgrounds and special needs of their children. The research participants were chosen as the main actors involved in the education of CwSN. The first participant, SR, is a civil servant teacher who has a daughter, HI, in the pre-primary class with Bloch Sulzberger syndrome (BSS). The second participant, AP, is a provincial civil servant who has a daughter CA, grade 5 with Down syndrome. The third participant, IA, is a housewife who has a son R,

grade 3 with nonverbal autistic special needs. The fourth participant, IS, is a shopkeeper mother who has a son G, kindergarten class B with nonverbal Autistic special needs. Other informants consisted of the school principal and homeroom teacher considering their knowledge of the information and data needed on the theme of this research.

Data collection methods used interviews, documentation and observation. The research interviews were semi-structured in-depth interviews about parental involvement in the education of CwSN. Documentation was used to support the research data by documenting parents' involvement in school activities. Observations were made by observing the activities of parents' involvement in school activities and observing children's behaviour in participating in classroom learning.

Triangulation of sources and methods was carried out to test the validity of the data. Source triangulation was used to check whether the subjects' and informants' information was valid or not by asking the same questions to several research subjects and informants. The method of triangulation was used to check the validity of the involvement data with written evidence of parents' attendance in school programs involving parents. Miles and Huberman's interactive data analysis technique consisting of data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing was used in this study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Elmafaza Inclusive School is an Islamic educational institution that implements an inclusive system where all children from various conditions can attend education together with certain mechanisms as needed. The school accepts all children regardless of economic, social, cultural and ability backgrounds. The school respects and accepts the differences that exist in students. The school prepares an environment and service system that ensures all children participate in various activities. Each child also receives educational services that are appropriate to his or her abilities. In addition, each child has the opportunity to participate in learning in ways and to varying degrees. Learning in this school considers learning methods that are tailored to the characteristics of the learners. Learning is sometimes conducted in special classrooms (resource rooms) and using special tools. The school manages early childhood education including playgroup, kindergarten, and pre-primary school as well as primary school. Almost all classes are inclusive classes containing both normal children and CwSN. Data on the number of students can be seen in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Motivation for parental involvement in the education process

Parents of CwSN realize that parental involvement in their children's education is essential. They believe that this involvement is an effort to provide the best for their children as well as a form of responsibility that must be fulfilled. SR realizes that her child with a diagnosis of BSS syndrome has incontinentia pigmenti, which means that his cognitive and motor development is not the same as his age. On the other



hand, IS, a parent of CwSN, added that children are entrusted by God, so it is the parent's responsibility to educate them.

Table 1. Data on the number of early childhood students at Elmafaza Klaten Inclusive School

Grade	Gender	Normal Student	CwSN Student	Amount
Playgroup A	Male	6	4	10
	Female	13	2	15
	Amount	19	6	25
Playgroup B	Male	9	6	15
	Female	12	-	12
	Amount	21	6	27
Kinder- garten A	Male	16	2	18
	Female	3	4	7
	Amount	19	6	25
Kinder- garten B	Male	10	4	14
	Female	10	4	14
	Amount	20	8	28
Pre- primary	Male	5	4	9
	Female	1	2	3
	Amount	6	6	12
Total		85	32	117

Table 2. Data on the number of elementary school students at Elmafaza Klaten Inclusive School

Grade	Gender	Normal Student	CwSN Student	Amount
1 st Grade	Male	2	2	4
	Female	-	-	-
	Amount	2	2	4
2 nd Grade	Male	-	1	1
	Female	-	1	1
	Amount	-	2	2
3 rd Grade	Male	1	2	3
	Female	1	1	2
	Amount	2	3	5
4 th Grade	Male	2	2	4
	Female	-	-	-
	Amount	2	2	4
5 th Grade	Male	2	-	2
	Female	-	2	2
	Amount	2	2	4
6 th Grade	Male	1	-	1
	Female	-	1	1
	Amount	1	1	2
Total		9	12	21

Parents of CwSN also believe that their involvement in education is an aid to preparing their children for puberty. Involvement in education is also seen as a forum for parents and teachers to meet to discuss their child's education. For AP, this is very important so that all parties can understand each other. Similarly, IA stated that her child is special and needs special attention, especially now that he has entered puberty. The same thing was expressed by the principal parents' involvement in education is their responsibility as the main educator as well as an effort to find solutions to their children's problems [22].

The statements above show the positive motivation of parents of CwSN at Elmafaza inclusive school. This motivation is the belief that underlies parents' high involvement in education. Beliefs in parents' involvement in education found in this study include (1) providing the best education for their children, (2) assisting CwSN to go through

the puberty phase, and (3) attending parent-teacher meetings to discuss their children's education. This corroborates the opinion that parental beliefs are a strong predictor of parental involvement, especially for CwSN students in inclusive schools [23]. Schools need parental involvement in education so that the education process of CwSN can take place effectively [22]. This is in line with the opinion that teachers need parental involvement for effective learning [14]. Moreover, parents will experience positive aspects while caring for their children. Parents feel their children are a source of happiness, receive support from the community and increase spirituality [24].

Home-based Parental Involvement

Parents' involvement at home is done by providing examples of good ethics and behaviour for children to emulate, helping children to complete tasks, and making independence a top priority. This is done by SR who assists CwSN at home so that they have independence and the ability to read-write and behave well. Giving examples in terms of independence in daily activities is also done, as IS involves children in cooking, cleaning the house, washing and organizing the contents of the cupboards. For children with puberty, parental involvement focuses on the introduction of puberty and worship skills. The division of roles between father and mother in this involvement is also well planned. IA with a male child who has reached puberty shares the role with her husband where the father assists the child in washing and ablution as well as in worship (prayer). Meanwhile, AP, who has reached puberty with a female CwSN, shares her role with her husband where the father is in charge of accommodating the child's outpourings and stories of daily experiences. With this division of roles, CwSN are better monitored and experience an increase in independence [22]. Parental involvement is carried out with a religious-based parenting pattern. SR involvement at home is carried out with various agendas such as reading bedtime stories according to children's requests, listening to the recitation of the Qur'an, and accompanying children to memorize prayers and verses of the Qur'an. This will increase communication within the family, which can affect the formation of children's character [25]. Parents also follow up on school activities by asking the teacher about them. This is applied to non-verbal autistic children with autism, the form of parental involvement at home is carried out by IS and IA by establishing intensive communication with teachers. As for AA, parents of children with Down syndrome accompany their children with several agendas including listening to their stories about activities at school, following up on activities at school by looking for references on the internet, and modelling and adjusting movements with creations from parents.

The findings of the forms of parental involvement at home and high levels of involvement described above were found in the study during post-pandemic and normal times. This is in contrast to research which concludes that parental involvement at home during non-pandemic times is lower if parents perceive the school has given good attention to their children [26]. This finding also confirms and strengthens the forms of parental involvement in education in inclusive schools. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model theory of



parental involvement states that forms of parental involvement at home can be in the form of parental modelling, parental reinforcement, and parental encouragement. [27]–[29]. These issues emerged and were found to be consistent among the parents of CwSN studied.

School-based Parental Involvement

Parents' involvement at school is in the form of participation in educational activities organized by the school. The interview results showed a high level of parental involvement in participating in various discussion forums, parenting studies and outing classes. This was welcomed by parents of CwSN at Elmafaza inclusive school. The high level of involvement was due to parents' desire to synergize learning activities at school and home. Meanwhile, parents who were rarely involved were busy and suspected of lacking awareness of the importance of their involvement.

The findings in this study detail the description of the forms of parental involvement in schools (school-based involvement) according to the theory of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler models [29]. The high level of parental involvement in schools in the post-pandemic period as shown in the results of this study once again negates the findings of low levels of involvement in the non-pandemic period [26]. Parents' involvement in some school activities is in line with the finding that parents tend to be more involved in some school-based activities than others [30].

Children with disabilities' internal motivation and selfregulation strategies

The pre-primary class female child with BSS has shown an independent attitude that is starting to emerge as a result of habituation at school and home. The child has a willingness to learn without intervention or orders from parents. SR as a parent often gets reports from the child himself regarding the activities he does at school without being asked first. Similarly, a boy in the pre-primary class with nonverbal autistic special needs showed independence, said a few words, was sensitive and socialized. The homeroom teacher confirmed that the pre-primary class boy's development was not only independent but also social, emotional, verbal and cognitive. Similarly, the children's self-regulation in independence, emotional management and socialization was very evident in the higher grades. A grade 4 male child with nonverbalautistic needs was able to manage emotions, show obedience to teachers, socialize and empathize. He also showed the development of independence and verbal skills. Meanwhile, the self-regulation of a grade 5 female child with Down syndrome showed significant improvement in terms of independence and control of emotions and actions. In addition, the child has demonstrated the ability to communicate what she wants and ask others for help when experiencing difficulties.

The findings of this study show that internal motivation and self-regulation in CwSN begin to emerge in the preprimary grades. The children in the higher grades showed significant development of internal motivation and self-regulation. This is level 4 in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's view where internal motivation, self-regulation in learning and the ability to ask others for help are the positive effects of parental involvement [27]–[29]. The findings also

corroborate the notion that parental involvement and support for children affect the development of student achievement [31]. In the case of CwSN, the role of parental involvement has a significant effect on achievement motivation and academic achievement [32].

Barriers to Parental Involvement

The time factor is the biggest obstacle to parents' involvement in CwSN's education. Working parents admit that they have limited time. Other parents, although stated that they had no problems in assisting, the quantity was still very minimal. In addition, parents must have the energy to adjust to their children's various wishes, meet their needs and take them to therapy activities. The limited time and energy for mentoring is also due to parents having to take care of their other children. Some parents feel that they have the time, do not experience constraints, and show concern for their children [33]. However, in reality, some parents only set a side one or two hours each day, and some parents are not able to be involved at home every day because they have to share their attention with other children. Nevertheless, some parents, despite working full-time, try to set aside time for their children every day. Another study found that full-time professional parents had lower involvement than parents who worked part-time or did not work [34]. In such conditions, parents must think again so that they set aside time for children so that they do not miss the process of forming children's characters who are expected to have noble morals

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The results show that the forms of parental involvement in the education process of CwSN at Elmafaza Klaten Inclusive School are very diverse. These forms of involvement include acting as models of behaviour, ethics and independence (parental modelling), providing reinforcement when the willingness to learn arises (parental reinforcement), and providing encouragement so that children's cognitive abilities develop (parental encouragement). Parental involvement can foster internal motivation and self-regulation strategies in children. Researchers suggest that parenting study activities be held and optimized by inclusive schools as a medium for parental involvement. In addition, the synergy between parents and schools needs to be maintained to have a positive impact on the development of CwSN.

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