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Understanding Of Raudhatul Athfal (Ra) Teachers In Handling Children With Special Needs In South Bekasi District

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ABSTRAK:

This study aims to obtain data related to the understanding of Raudhatul Athfal (RA) teachers in handling children with special needs in the South Bekasi District area. The population of this study was 23 Raudhatul Athfal (RA) of 99 people and a research sample of 31 teachers who were respondents who were actively teaching in the South Bekasi District area. The research used quantitative methods with survey methods and questionnaires as a tool in collecting data from respondents. The research was conducted in Raudhatul Athfal in South Bekasi Subdistrict with the results obtained that 36.46% of teachers understand children with special needs (ABK), 53.54% of teachers do not understand children with special needs (ABK), 65% of teachers are not confident to handle children with special needs (ABK), 65% of teachers do not make RPI, and 45% of teachers do not conduct early detection of growth and development for children with special needs (ABK). The lack of understanding in dealing with children with special needs is an obstacle in providing education services for children with special needs.

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1. Introduction

Early childhood is a child who is in the age range of 0 to 6 years. In this phase children experience very rapid growth and development both in terms of physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and language. Therefore, this age period is often referred to as the "golden age" or golden period, therefore the experience and stimulation provided in this period will greatly affect future development. According to Law number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, the definition of early childhood is explained in Article 1 Paragraph 14, namely "Early childhood education is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to six years of age which is carried out through educational stimuli to help physical and spiritual growth and development so that children have readiness to enter further education." Thus early childhood according to the law is children from birth to six years of age, and the education provided at this age group aims to optimize their potential as a whole in preparation for entering the next level of education. According to Hurlock in her developmental psychology book explains that early childhood is an individual who is experiencing a period of rapid development in various aspects, especially motor, language, social and emotional. This period is known as a time of playing, learning and imitating the behavior of the adults around them. Meanwhile, according to Montessori in the book William Crain's Theory of Development, early childhood is an individual who is in a sensitive period to stimuli from the surrounding environment. This period is an important period for the development of children's intelligence and character, so it requires appropriate stimulation. Early childhood is in the Early Childhood Education (PAUD), Kindergarten (TK) and Raudhatul Athfal (RA) units which are the basic education level. Students in PAUD/RA have diversity without exception children with special needs (ABK).

Children with special needs (ABK) are children who experience obstacles or disorders in physical, intellectual, emotional, social development or have the potential for special intelligence and / or talent, so that they require special educational services and interventions that suit their needs. According to Heward (2003), children with special needs are children with special characteristics that are different from children in general without showing mental, emotional or physical disabilities. According to Mulyono (2006) children with special needs are children who are classified as disabled

or have disabilities and also gifted children. Children with special needs (ABK) are children who grow and develop with various differences with children in general (Khairun Nisa et al., 2018). In Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System Article 32 paragraph (1) states that "Special education is education for students who have difficulty in following the learning process due to physical, emotional, mental, social abnormalities and / or have the potential for gifted intelligence. Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 17 of 2010 on the Management and Implementation of Education, Article 134 Paragraph (1) states that "Special education is provided for students who have physical, emotional, mental, social abnormalities, and/or have special intelligence and talent potential." UNESCO in 1994 in the Salamanca Statement emphasized the importance of inclusive education that includes children with special needs in mainstream education, with appropriate support services. This service support can work well if there are teachers who play a role in providing stimulation for early childhood development.

The role of PAUD/RA teachers in assisting children with special needs is very important and has a long-term impact. Teachers spearhead the detection, guidance and creation of inclusive and supportive learning environments. Among the important roles of ECD/RA teachers in dealing with children with special needs, it is often the case that ECD/RA teachers are the first to detect or realize developmental differences in children including physical, cognitive, language and social development. Teachers play a role in providing inclusive learning by ensuring that all children, including those with special needs, receive equal educational rights, including learning methods that suit the individual needs of the child. Teachers act as facilitators of children's development by supporting all aspects of their development such as training gross and fine motor skills according to children's development, providing stimulation in accordance with their intellectual abilities and helping children build self-confidence and interact with peers (Wardani et al., 2021). Because the role of teachers is very important, it is necessary to gain knowledge about students with special needs in order to understand, the needs and characteristics of students with special needs so that children with special needs get educational services according to their needs. In providing appropriate services, sufficient competence is needed.

Teacher competencies are mentioned in Law no 14 of 2005, especially in article 8, which states that teacher competencies include pedagogic, personality, social and professional. In addition, Minister of Education Regulation No. 16/2007 specifically regulates the qualification standards of teachers including Raudhatul Athfal (RA) teachers. A teacher is an individual who has knowledge that is able to capture the essence and explain the knowledge he teaches (Arsini et al., 2023). Teachers must have sufficient knowledge or knowledge to teach their students. Teachers in the discussion in this study are RA teachers who are required to be creative and play an important role in realizing the achievement of educational goals in Indonesia, especially at the RA level.

In reality, RA teachers still need training and assistance, especially related to handling children with special needs, therefore a training program is needed. This is in line with the results of observations made by Yunitasari et al. in Jati Luhur related to the ability of PAUD/RA teachers about children with special needs, stating that among RA teachers still do not understand about children with special needs due to lack of knowledge and skills (Yunitasari et al., 2023). Teachers' understanding of the handling of children with special needs is still needed so that teachers are able to provide educational services that suit children's needs.

Understanding according to Peter W. Airasian et al who revised Benjamin Samuel Bloom, M.D's book on taxonomy (2014) states that the cognitive process in understanding includes interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, concluding, comparing and explaining while according to Winkel (1996) understanding in the context of education according to him is a person's ability to understand and capture the meaning of the material learned without having to remember verbatim (Eva & Farida, 1999). Another opinion about the understanding of understanding put forward by Benjamin Bloom quoted by Nana Sudjana in the book Assessment of Teaching and Learning Results (1990), according to him understanding is a cognitive domain, namely understanding is a higher level of knowledge so that according to Bloom's taxonomy understanding includes the ability to capture meaning and meaning (Sari et al., 2022). According to Ngalim Purwanto (2001) understanding is the ability to understand concepts, situations, and facts that are known. According to some experts, it can be concluded that understanding is a person's ability to improve his thinking patterns where understanding is able to explain something based on his knowledge and memory.

Based on the above, this research was conducted to find out more about "Understanding Raudhatul Athfal (RA) Teachers in Handling Children with Special Needs in South Bekasi District."

2. Methodology

This research is a quantitative study with a survey method. This method provides an overview of the object under study through sample or population data as it is. The variable to be studied is the understanding of Raudhatul Athfal (RA) teachers in handling children with special needs. The research was conducted in the South Bekasi District area. This research was conducted from March to May 2025. By going through the stages: (a) collecting data, (b) submitting a research proposal, (c) presenting a research proposal (d) compiling research instruments, (e) taking care of research permits, (f) research implementation, (g) data processing and (h) research reports.

The population in this study were 23 Raudhatul Athfal (RA) as many as 99 teachers in the South Bekasi area. With a research sample of 31 Raudhatul Athfal (RA) teachers as research respondents.

The research instrument is in the form of a questionnaire with a combination of closed and open questions or mixed instruments with the aim of getting richer and deeper information and getting more comprehensive data. For data analysis techniques carried out by descriptive and infrential statistical analysis. The data that has been obtained is processed according to the survey research approach where closed questions do not determine the right or wrong answer but rather the number of respondents who understand with a score of 1 and who have not 0. Then to get a deep understanding or lack of it by looking at the analysis of the results of the respondents' answers in their explanation for drawing conclusions.

3. Result And Discussion

Results

Descriptive research results regarding the demographic profile of Raudhatul Athfal (RA) teachers in South Bekasi District as well as their understanding and readiness in handling children with special needs (ABK) and the implementation of inclusive education.

1. Demographic Profile of RA Teachers in South Bekasi Sub-District Demographic analysis of respondents (RA teachers) provides an overview of the characteristics of the population under study:
   a. Age Distribution of Teachers: The majority of RA teachers are in the age group of 40-56 years (Mature Age), reaching 47% of the total respondents. The second significant proportion is occupied by the Young Age group (20-30 years) with 35%, indicating the regeneration of teachers. Meanwhile, the Medium Age group (31-40 years) represented only 18%. This pattern indicates that most teachers have mature teaching experience or are just starting their career in RA.
   b. Distribution of Teachers Length of Teaching: In line with the age distribution, the length of teaching experience data also shows polarization. The group with Short Experience (0-5 years) constitutes the largest proportion, at 41.94%, indicating that many teachers are relatively new. On the other hand, the Long Experience group (16-30 years) is also quite large at 35.48%, representing highly experienced senior teachers. The Medium Experience category (6-15 years) is the smallest, accounting for only 22.58%. This overall demographic data sets the important context that the research sample is dominated by teachers from relatively recent or highly experienced age and experience categories, with lower representation in the medium category.

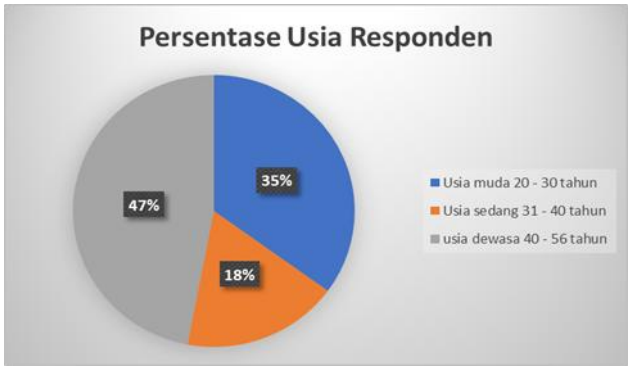


Figure 1: The Presentation of Respondents Age

2. RA Teachers Level of Knowledge about Children with Special Needs (ABK) The study measured teachers' understanding of the definition, types and characteristics of children with special needs:

a. Basic Knowledge of Children with Special Needs: Results showed a low level of basic awareness; 36.46% (12 out of 31 teachers) said "Yes" to having basic knowledge about children with special needs. Teachers generally understood that children with special needs are children who require special care or attention due to their physical, mental or emotional conditions and need an appropriate educational environment. This high number provides a strong foundation for the practice of managing children with disabilities in the RA environment.
b. Knowledge of Different Types of Special Needs: 47% of teachers said "Yes" to knowing the different types of special needs in early childhood, indicating a low level of knowledge about the diversity of children with special needs. The most frequently mentioned types were Autism, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and Down Syndrome, followed by sensory disabilities such as Deafness, Speech Impairment and Disability. However, the 53% of teachers who said "No" and the variation in the depth of explanation indicate the need for more comprehensive understanding.
c. Knowledge of Common Characteristics of Children with Special Needs: a significant number of teachers, 53.55%, said "Yes" to having general knowledge of th the characteristics of children with special needs. Qualitative explanations showed a focus on developmental delays and learning difficulties (e.g. lack of focus, slow learners), prominent behavioral traits (e.g. hyperactivity, concentration difficulties, poor interaction) and physical and health characteristics (e.g. physical disabilities, physical similarities in Down syndrome). This understanding is generally good and crucial for early identification.
d. Differences Between Slow Learners and Children with Special Needs: While 54% of teachers said "Yes" to knowing the difference between slow learners and children with disabilities, 46% said "No". The main distinction teachers consistently identified was between slow learners and children with special needs. The main differences that teachers consistently identified were cognitive ability/IQ (slow learners below average but not intellectually disabled, children with intellectual disabilities below normal intelligence) and type of treatment (slow learners with repetition, children with specific and intensive treatment). The fact that some teachers did not understand these differences indicates the need for further clarification to ensure the right approach.

3. RA Teachers Attitudes and Readiness for Inclusive Education The study also explored teachers' perceptions and readiness to implement inclusive education:

a. Feeling Comfortable Teaching Children with Special Needs: Most respondents, 64%, reported feeling comfortable teaching children with special needs in RA classes. This is a positive indicator of adaptation and acceptance and provides strong statistical support for the sustainability of inclusive education. However, the 36% who felt uncomfortable indicated a need for additional support or training.
b. Participation in Specialized Training for Children with Special Needs: The data showed an almost even distribution with 32% of teachers saying 'Yes' to having attended specialized training and 68% saying 'No'. These proportions indicate a potential need for ongoing training and the need to extend training to groups that have not yet participated.
c. Belief that Children with Special Needs Can Learn with Other Children: The level of belief was high with 64% of teachers believing that children with special needs can learn alongside other children. This reflects a positive view of inclusion. However, the 36% of teachers who do not believe this indicates a segment that needs a deeper understanding of the concept of inclusion.
d. Belief that Every Child (Including Children with Special Needs) Has Potential: The results show a moderate level of belief, with 67% of teachers believing that all children, including those with special needs, have potential that can be developed. This positive and inclusive attitude is the foundation for child-centered education practices.
e. Perceptions of The Impact of The Presence of Children with Special Needs on The Learning Process of Other Students: 65% of teachers stated that the presence of children with special needs in the classroom "does not hinder" the learning process of other students. This highlights the challenges of managing an inclusive classroom and the need for differentiated learning strategies or classroom management support.
f. Willingness to Adjust Teaching Methods to Meet The Needs of Children with Special Needs: Teachers willingness to adapt their teaching methods for the needs of children with special needs was very high, with 80% stating that they were willing to do so. This commitment is key to creating an effective learning environment. The small group of 20% who were not willing needs attention for further support.
g. Ability to Recognize Early Signs of Children with Special Needs: Most teachers (54%) felt able to recognize the early signs of children with special needs, which is crucial for early identification and appropriate intervention. However, the 46% who felt unable indicated a need for more specific and practical training.

h. Knowledge of Next Steps if Children with Special Needs are Suspected: Most teachers (51%) had knowledge of the initial steps to take after identification, such as observation, communication and consultation with parents, and referral to experts (psychologists/therapists). Some had also thought about treatment adaptations. However, the 49% of teachers who "Don't Know" the next steps is a critical area that needs to be strengthened so that the identification process leads to appropriate support.

4. Classroom Strategies and Treatments Related to Children with Special Needs

a. 55% of teachers had used early detection instruments, indicating a positive effort to identify children's development in a structured way. However, the large percentage (45%) of teachers who "Never" filled in early detection instruments is a serious concern. This indicates that almost half of the teachers have not adopted or had adequate access/training to use standardized tools to detect children's development.

b. Use of varied learning media to support



Figure 2: Use of varied learning media to support

c. Analysis of how RA teachers in South Bekasi sub-district give positive reinforcement to children with special needs only 35% gave it. Most teachers, 65%, did not provide it. This area can significantly hinder the behavioral and academic progress of children with disabilities in the classroom.



Figure 3. Analysis of how RA teachers in South Bekasi sub-district give positive reinforcement to children with special needs

d. Only 35% actually cooperated. This shows that knowledge of who to contact does not always translate into real collaborative action. The fact that 65% of teachers did not collaborate with specialists is a serious concern.



Figure 4: collaboration with experts

Discussion

This data illustrates that RA teachers in South Bekasi sub-district do not yet have the potential to become educators in inclusive institutions, but supported by good intentions, positive teacher beliefs, significant support from management and special assistants, and a high attitude of openness to new strategies, this potential has not yet been fully realized in structured and professional practice due to significant gaps in practical skills and access to resources.

Teacher's low confidence in working with children with special needs is a central issue that is most likely a consequence of a lack of practical skills (such as RPI development, positive reinforcement, use of varied media) and limited access to professional development resources (seminars/workshops, references). Systematic early identification processes and active collaboration with experts are also far from optimal.

Another finding in this study was that teachers themselves overwhelmingly felt the need for further training and showed a very open attitude towards new strategies. This represents an opportunity for successful intervention.

4. Conclusion

From the results of the discussion described above, it can be concluded that the understanding of Raudhatul Athfal (RA) teachers in handling children with special needs in the South Bekasi District area is obtained data that 36.46% of teachers understand Children with Special Needs (ABK), 53.54% of teachers do not understand Children with Special Needs (ABK), 65% of teachers are not confident in handling Children with Special Needs (ABK), 65% of teachers do not make RPI, and 45% of teachers do not conduct early detection of growth and development for Children with Special Needs (ABK). The lack of understanding in dealing with children with special needs is an obstacle in providing educational services for children with special needs. In addition, Raudhatul Athfal (RA) teachers do not have the confidence to realize the PAUD Unit, due to a lack of practical skills and lack of access to professional development resources.

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