

THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN SUPPORTING THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE HOME AND SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the role of the family in supporting the education of children with special needs (ABK) in the home and school environment. Using a qualitative approach with a case study method, data was obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation of several families with children with special needs in inclusive schools. The results of the study show that families provide support in the form of learning assistance, emotional strengthening, routine creation, and management of a conducive learning environment at home. In addition, parental involvement in school activities such as teacher consultations, parent meetings, and the preparation of individualized education programs also strengthen the success of children's learning processes. However, the study also identified a number of barriers faced by families, including limited time, knowledge, costs, and social pressures from the environment. These findings confirm that the role of the family is very important and multidimensional in the education of children and children. Therefore, synergy between families, schools, and communities is needed to create an inclusive and sustainable education system. This study provides recommendations for educational institutions and policy makers to strengthen the role of families in assisting children with special needs.

Keywords: *Children with Special Needs, Family Role, Inclusive Education, Learning Support, School Collaboration.*

INTRODUCTION

Children with special needs (ABK) are part of a society that has unique characteristics and requires a special approach in the process of growth and development, including in terms of education (Dewi, 2025). Their existence demands serious attention, not only from educational institutions and governments, but also from the family as the immediate environment that is the earliest to exert influence. Family is the main foundation in shaping children's personality, character, and readiness to undergo formal and non-formal education (Sujianto et al., 2023). In the midst of the complexity of the needs of children with special needs, the role of the family has become very central and decisive. The family not only acts as a caregiver, but also as the first and foremost educator who can understand the individual needs of the child thoroughly (Wahy, 2012). Emotional, moral, and practical support from the family has been proven to have a significant impact on children's success in attending education at school and in their social life. In the context of inclusive education, many schools have opened up spaces for children with special needs to learn with other children (Marsini, 2023). However, the success of inclusive education does not only depend on school readiness, but also on the active involvement of families in accompanying children's learning processes. The absence of family roles is often the main obstacle for children to develop optimally in the school environment. Family involvement in ABK education is not only limited to academic aspects, but also includes social, emotional, and psychological aspects (Saidah & Muthmainnah, 2025). These children often need special guidance to manage their emotions, form healthy social interactions, and develop independent life skills. All of these things will be easier to achieve if the family is active and participates positively. Unfortunately, not all families have the same understanding and readiness to support the education of children with special needs. Some parents even feel anxious, confused, or feel incapable of dealing with their child's condition. Lack of information, economic limitations, and social pressure are factors that affect the low participation of families in supporting children's education (Wulandari et al., 2025). In

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situations like these, it is important to educate families about the needs of their children individually and how they can contribute concretely to the educational process. Parental education through training, counseling, and coaching can be a solution to strengthen the capacity of families in facing these challenges (Marsini et al., 2022). Families who are knowledgeable and have a positive attitude towards their children's conditions will find it easier to create a home atmosphere that is conducive to learning. Home can be a fun learning space, where children feel accepted, appreciated, and motivated to continue learning and developing according to their potential. In addition, open communication between parents and schools is an important key in supporting the success of children's education. When parents and teachers understand and work together, learning strategies can be designed more effectively and according to the characteristics of children. The synergy between home and school not only accelerates children's academic development, but also builds children's confidence and courage in facing the outside world. Children with special needs who receive full support from family and school will have a greater chance of living independently and actively participating in society. In the school environment, the presence of parents can also be a form of advocacy for the rights of children with special needs. Parents can be partners in voicing their children's needs and ensuring that the learning environment available is indeed inclusive and welcoming to all differences.

The importance of the role of the family cannot be separated from the cultural and religious values embraced by the community. In many cultures, families have moral and spiritual responsibilities in raising children. This is a motivation for families to remain strong, patient, and loving in accompanying their children. Even so, the family's struggle in accompanying children with special needs is often not easy. They have to face social stigma, limited facilities, and psychological challenges in maintaining a balance of emotions and expectations. Therefore, social support from communities, educational institutions, and the government is urgently needed to strengthen the role of the family. In practice, the form of family support for the education of children with special needs varies greatly, from helping with schoolwork, attending parent-teacher meetings, to providing additional therapy outside of school hours. All of these forms of involvement, no matter how small, contribute greatly to a child's development. The education of children with special needs is a long journey that requires patience, commitment, and unlimited love (Joseph, 2019). Families who are able to be protectors and guides will have an extraordinary impact on shaping children's future. Along with the times, access to information and technology opens up wider opportunities for families to learn and develop with their children. Online platforms, parent communities, and educational counseling services are resources that can be used to strengthen the role of families.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that each child is a unique individual. There is no one-size-fits-all approach for all children with special needs (Selian, 2024). Therefore, families need to have flexibility and openness in exploring various appropriate approaches. In many cases, the success of the education of children with special needs is not determined by intelligence alone, but by perseverance and the quality of support provided by the immediate environment, namely the family. Consistency and sincerity in accompanying children are the main foundation in creating meaningful change. Therefore, studies on the role of the family in supporting the education of children with special needs are very important to be conducted. A deep understanding of family dynamics, interaction patterns, and strategies can provide new insights in the development of more inclusive education policies. Through this paper, the author wants to describe and examine how the family can play an active role in supporting the education of children with special needs, both at home and at school. It is hoped that the results of this study can be a reference and inspiration for other families and interested parties in building a fair and inclusive education system for all children.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with the type of case study research (Assyakurrohim et al., 2023). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to delve deeply into the role of the family in supporting the education of children with special needs in the context of home and school. Case studies provide space to understand phenomena holistically and contextually through direct observation, interviews, and documentation. The research location was conducted in one of the inclusion schools and residential environments for children with special needs in Depok City, West Java. The selection of this location was carried out purposively, taking into consideration that the school has implemented an inclusive education system and there is active involvement of parents in the child's education process. The subjects in this study are families of children with special needs who are studying in inclusive schools. The determination of the subject was carried out by purposive sampling technique, which is to select informants based on certain criteria that are relevant to the focus of the research. The criteria in question include: parents or guardians who live in the same house as the child, are actively involved in children's education both at home and at school, and are willing to be resource persons.

The data collection technique is carried out through several methods, namely in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews are conducted in a semi-structured manner so that the researcher can obtain detailed data but remain flexible in following the direction of the informant's conversation. Observations are carried out to observe the interaction between families and children in the home environment as well as when attending activities at school. Documentation is used to collect secondary data such as children's education records, teacher-parent communication agenda books, and documentation of family activities that support the child's learning process (Data, 2015). To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher used the triangulation technique, which is comparing and confirming data from various sources and methods. Data from interviews will be verified through observation and documentation in order to obtain an accurate and objective picture of the role of the family (Scott, 2017). The data analysis process is carried out interactively and continuously using the model (Miles, M. B., & Huberman, 1994), namely through three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. Data reduction is carried out by filtering relevant information, data presentation is carried out in the form of narratives and thematic tables, while conclusions are drawn based on patterns or themes that emerge from field data. In conducting research, researchers also uphold research ethics, such as maintaining the confidentiality of informant identities, asking for informed consent, and providing space for informants to refuse or stop their involvement at any time if they feel uncomfortable. This research is expected to contribute to enriching the treasures of inclusive education studies, especially in understanding and strengthening the role of the family as a strategic partner in supporting the education of children with special needs. In addition, the results of this research are also expected to be a practical reference for teachers, schools, and policymakers in designing programs that involve families more actively and meaningfully.

RESULTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Forms of Family Support at Home

The results of interviews and observations show that families provide support in various forms, both directly and indirectly. Direct support includes assistance in learning, therapeutic mentoring, and motivation. Meanwhile, indirect support includes creating a conducive home environment, setting children's daily schedules, and strengthening routines that suit children's needs. Most of the informants showed a high awareness of the importance of the role of the family in shaping children's learning habits. Parents take time every day to accompany their children with lessons, do schoolwork, and practice motor and cognitive skills repeatedly.

Table 1. Forms of Family Support at Home

Yes	Support Type	Forms of Family Activities	Frequency
1	Learning assistance	Reading together, doing homework, writing exercises	Every day
2	Emotional support	Provide motivation, hugs, positive reinforcement	Daily
3	Self-therapy at home	Motor Movement Training, Talk Therapy	2–3x/week
4	Environment settings	Calm atmosphere, dedicated study areas, structured routines	Consistent
5	Social habits	Practice communication, play with siblings or neighbors	3–4x/week

This data shows that family support is holistic, including academic, emotional, physical, and social aspects that support the child's learning process at home. This study found that families actively provide various forms of support that are very meaningful in the process of children's learning at home. Activities such as accompanying learning, providing motivation, accustoming children to routines, and managing children's emotions became daily activities that were consistently carried out by research informants. These findings reinforce the theory (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) about the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which emphasizes the importance of the role of adults or better able in helping children reach their maximum potential. In the context of ABK, parents act as scaffolding that directs, facilitates, and assists children in mastering new skills that they have not been able to achieve on their own. A home environment that is arranged with a calm atmosphere, a special learning area, and a consistent routine pattern is also a form of strengthening children's positive behavior. This is in line with the behavioristic theory of the (Skinner & Belmont, 1993), explaining that the repetition of a behavior reinforced with a reward will increase the child's likelihood of repeating it. Thus, the role of parents in providing positive reinforcement such as praise, hugs, or small gifts after the child completes the learning task is an important stimulus in the development of children with special needs.

2. The Role of Family in Cooperation with Schools

Family involvement in the school context includes communication with teachers, participation in school activities, and involvement in the preparation of individual children's programs. Parents who were the subjects of the study regularly attended parent-teacher meetings, participated in child development evaluation sessions, and established active communication through the school communication book or communication application. Interviews with inclusion classroom teachers showed that children with active family support showed faster progress in academic and social skills. The family is also an important source of information about the child's condition that cannot always be observed by teachers during school hours.

Table 2. Forms of Family and School Cooperation

Yes	Form of Cooperation	Frequency/Participation Rate	Information
1	Parent-teacher meeting	Monthly routine	Followed by 90% of the informants
2	Daily communication	Through the agenda/application book	Carried out by all informants
3	Preparation of individual programs	At the beginning of the school year	Be involved in the preparation of an IEP (Individualized Education Plan)
4	School activities	Outing class, bazaar, seminar	70% of informants actively participate
5	Teacher-expert consultation	When needed	40% follow follow-up consultations

This form of cooperation is proof that families not only support from home, but also become active partners in the child's formal education process. The results of the study also confirm that communication and collaboration between families and schools greatly determine the success of children's education. Parental participation in regular meetings, teacher consultations, and the formulation of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a tangible form of active involvement in the formal education process. This reflects the basic principles in theory (Epstein & King, 2002) About the Six Types of Parental Involvement, which includes communication, involvement in learning at home, attendance at school, and decision-making with teachers. When parents are involved in decision-making and understand children's learning strategies, the learning process becomes more synchronous and adaptive. Furthermore, the teacher in this study said that children's progress is greatly influenced by family involvement. These findings are in line with previous research by (US), 1997) which states that parental involvement has a significant relationship with children's learning achievement, even in groups of children with special needs. In this case, the family is not only a caregiver, but an active partner of the school in assisting children's growth and development.

3. Obstacles Faced by Families in Supporting ABK Education

Although family support is relatively high, there are a number of obstacles faced. These barriers include limited time due to parental work, lack of understanding of the characteristics of children's special needs, economic limitations in funding additional therapies, and social pressures from an environment that is not yet friendly to children with special needs. Some parents also admitted to experiencing stress and emotional exhaustion because they had to divide their time between work and their child's intensive needs. This affects the quality of support they can provide consistently.

Table 3. Obstacles Faced by Families

Yes	Types of Barriers	Percentage of Reporters (%)	Information
1	Time limitations	60%	Parents work full-time
2	Lack of specialized knowledge	75%	Not everyone understands educational strategies
3	Social pressure/stigma	50%	Avoid certain social interactions
4	Limitations on the cost of therapy	65%	Unable to afford professional therapy
5	Emotional exhaustion	70%	Burnout due to dual roles

These obstacles are challenges that need to be overcome with a collaborative approach between families, schools, communities, and the government so that support for ABK can be carried out in a sustainable manner.

Although the role of the family is very important, the study also found various obstacles in practice. Some of the main constraints include time constraints due to work, lack of understanding of special needs, the economic burden on therapy, and social pressure and stigma from the environment. This reflects the complexity of the dual roles faced by families, especially mothers as the child's main companion, which is in line with the findings (Friedman et al., 2011) regarding the psychosocial challenges experienced by the families of the crew members. Emotional exhaustion and feelings of helplessness are often experienced by families because they have to carry out various roles simultaneously, from caregivers, teachers, to child advocates. This condition creates psychological pressure that, if not treated, can reduce the effectiveness of the support provided to the child. Therefore, a multidisciplinary approach and cross-sectoral support, including from the government, schools, and communities, are needed so that families do not feel alone in carrying out their roles. Social stigma is also a serious obstacle. Some informants stated that they avoided social activities because they were afraid that their children would be treated discriminatory. This shows the importance of building an inclusive society that is aware of the existence of ABK, as mandated in Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities which affirms their rights to get proper education and equal treatment (Halalia, 2017).

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the role of the family is very vital in supporting the education of children with special needs, both in the home and school environment. At home, the family serves as the primary educator who builds learning habits, provides emotional support, and creates an atmosphere conducive to children's development. Through learning assistance, strengthening positive behaviors, and forming daily routines, families help children develop academic and social skills more optimally. On the other hand, the active involvement of the family in school activities has also been proven to strengthen the child's formal education process. The family not only serves as an external support, but also as a partner in the preparation of individual learning programs and regular communication with teachers. This collaboration encourages the synchronization of educational strategies at home and at school, so that children's needs can be met holistically. However, there are various challenges faced by families, such as limited time, knowledge, therapy costs, and social pressure that are still often experienced by parents. These obstacles show that families cannot walk alone in accompanying children with special needs. Therefore, strong synergy is needed between schools, communities, and the government to create an inclusive and sustainable education ecosystem. Overall, the role of the family is not only important, but also determines the direction and success of the education of children with special needs. Consistent, loving, and understanding-based support will help children grow into independent and meaningful individuals in society. This research confirms that family is a key pillar in the success of inclusive education.

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