

Inclusive Education and the Protection of Children's Rights within an Islamic Educational Framework

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the concept of inclusive education from the perspective of Islamic education in promoting a non-discriminatory educational system. The research adopts a library-based methodology, analyzing 25 sources comprising textbooks, peer-reviewed academic journals, and relevant legal and policy documents. The scope of the study encompasses the historical development of inclusive education, its guiding principles of implementation, and the theological foundations of children's rights within Islamic teachings. The findings indicate that inclusive education is congruent with core Islamic values of equality and justice, as articulated in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13), which emphasizes that human dignity is determined by piety rather than physical or social attributes. Although Indonesia has established a relatively comprehensive regulatory framework supporting inclusive education, its implementation remains constrained by several factors, including limited teacher competence, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient institutional understanding. These findings underscore that the principles of "diversity as a strength" and the adoption of adaptive curricula represent practical manifestations of holistic Islamic education. Furthermore, synergetic collaboration among government institutions, educational providers, and the wider community is essential for fostering an equitable learning environment. Effective implementation ultimately requires strong teacher commitment to adaptive and responsive pedagogical practices to ensure that the potential of all learners, including children with special needs, is optimally developed in accordance with their individual capacities.

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji konsep pendidikan inklusif dalam perspektif pendidikan Islam guna mewujudkan sistem pendidikan yang non-diskriminatif. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah studi pustaka (*library research*) dengan menganalisis 25 referensi yang terdiri dari buku teks, jurnal ilmiah, dan peraturan perundangan terkait. Fokus kajian meliputi sejarah, prinsip pelaksanaan, serta landasan teologis hak anak. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan inklusif selaras dengan nilai fundamental Islam mengenai kesetaraan dan keadilan, sebagaimana ditegaskan dalam QS. Al-Hujurat: 13 bahwa kemuliaan manusia terletak pada ketakwaannya, bukan kondisi fisik. Meskipun secara regulasi di Indonesia sudah kuat, implementasinya masih terhambat oleh keterbatasan kompetensi guru, sarana prasarana, dan pemahaman sekolah. Temuan ini menekankan bahwa prinsip keragaman sebagai kekuatan dan kurikulum adaptif merupakan manifestasi pendidikan Islam yang holistik. Diperlukan kolaborasi sinergis antara pemerintah, sekolah, dan masyarakat untuk

menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang adil. Implementasi yang efektif menuntut komitmen guru dalam pembelajaran adaptif agar potensi setiap peserta didik, termasuk Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus (ABK), dapat berkembang optimal sesuai kemampuan masing-masing.

Keywords:

Inclusive Education, Islamic Perspective, Educational Equality.

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Introduction

Education is a fundamental concern worldwide, as it plays a vital role in preparing future generations. High-quality education is essential for developing human resources capable of responding to global challenges. Consequently, educational systems must continuously evolve and adapt to societal, technological, and global developments. One key strategy for ensuring such adaptability is curriculum refinement and revision. In Indonesia, the national curriculum has undergone eleven revisions, reflecting ongoing efforts to enhance educational quality and relevance (Yunus, Zakso, Priyadi, & Hartoyo, 2023). These reforms are intended to strengthen the capacity of the education system to meet contemporary demands and improve overall educational outcomes.

Given the central role of education in national development, it is imperative that educational systems are equitable and accessible to all members of society. In Indonesia, this principle is firmly grounded in Article 31, paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees that "every citizen has the right to education." This constitutional mandate applies to all Indonesians without exception, including children with special needs (*Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus*/ABK). To realize this right, a non-discriminatory educational approach, commonly referred to as inclusive education, is essential (Afandi, 2013). Inclusive education provides equal opportunities for all learners to participate in the same learning environment by deliberately eliminating barriers between typically developing students and those with disabilities. By rejecting categorization based on physical or cognitive limitations, inclusive education affirms the principle that every child is entitled to quality education aligned with their individual potential (Saputra, 2016).

In Indonesia, inclusive education has received increasing attention from the government, as evidenced by a series of regulatory frameworks that underpin its implementation. These include Law No. 4 of 1997, Law No. 23 of 2002 (Articles 48 and 49), and Law No. 20 of 2003 (Article 5, paragraph 1), as well as the publication of official guidelines for implementing inclusive education within the Independent Curriculum

framework by the Ministry of Education and Culture. As a demonstration of the government's commitment to inclusive education for persons with disabilities, pilot projects were officially launched in 2002 across nine provinces. Over the past two decades, this initiative has continued to develop, reflecting Indonesia's evolving efforts to institutionalize inclusive education within its national education system.

According to the latest data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) as of December 2023, a total of 40,164 formal schools in Indonesia have enrolled students with disabilities. In addition, data from the Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture (Kemenko PMK) show that the number of inclusive schools increased significantly, reaching 44,477 by September 2023, up from 35,802 in 2021. This expansion is also reflected in student enrollment, with 146,205 children with special needs (*Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus/ABK*) participating in inclusive education settings (Fauzan, 2023). Despite this quantitative progress, substantial challenges persist. It is estimated that approximately 30% of children with disabilities in Indonesia remain outside the formal education system, and only 14.8% of inclusive schools are equipped with Special Education Teachers (*Guru Pembimbing Khusus/GPK*) (Fauzan, 2023).

Research conducted by Yunus, Zakso, Priyadi, and Hartoyo (2023) indicates that challenges in the implementation of inclusive education occur not only at the level of educational institutions but also at the central policy level. At the school level, these challenges largely stem from principals' and teachers' limited understanding of inclusive education and its practical implementation. The study further highlights that the effectiveness of inclusive education is constrained by the limited availability of Special Needs Schools (*Sekolah Luar Biasa/SLB*), which are predominantly located in urban districts, with minimal or no presence in rural areas. Moreover, many teachers continue to exhibit a limited conceptual understanding of inclusive education, often perceiving it as an approach applicable exclusively to special needs schools rather than to mainstream educational institutions. Yunus, Zakso, Priyadi, and Hartoyo (2023) emphasizes that the inadequate implementation of inclusive education is influenced by several interrelated factors, including insufficient teacher awareness of its importance, a lack of adequate facilities and infrastructure, and limited professional development opportunities. Consequently, schools frequently rely on government support in the form of training and technical guidance to enhance their capacity to implement inclusive practices. In this context, Special Education Teachers play a crucial role in supporting students with special needs throughout the learning process (Yunus, Zakso, Priyadi, & Hartoyo, 2023). Based on these findings, it can be concluded that inclusive education in Indonesia has not yet been fully implemented in accordance with the legal mandate that education should be accessible to all children without exception. In this regard, Islamic education offers a profound normative and ethical perspective that can serve as a foundational pillar for strengthening inclusivity within the national education system.

Within the context of Islamic education, the principle of inclusivity is neither novel nor peripheral. From its inception, Islamic teachings have consistently emphasized

equality, justice, and the preservation of human dignity. The Qur'an affirms that human diversity constitutes a divinely ordained reality (*sunnatullah*), intended to serve as a source of mutual enrichment rather than a basis for discrimination (Parnawi & Syahrani, 2024). In educational practice, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exemplified these values by treating his companions without distinction based on physical condition, social status, or intellectual capacity. Narratives such as the Prophet's special consideration for the blind companion, 'Abdullāh ibn Umm Maktūm, illustrate the high regard Islam places on every individual's right to access knowledge. Despite this normative foundation, contemporary realities indicate that many Islamic educational institutions, both formal and non-formal, continue to face significant challenges in translating inclusive principles into practice. Numerous Islamic schools and madrasas remain inadequately prepared to accommodate learners with special needs. These constraints are evident in limited infrastructural accessibility, a shortage of qualified and trained educators, and insufficient institutional understanding of how Islamic values can be operationalized as a robust framework for inclusive education (Zainal, Azura, Putri, & Sari, 2025).

The present study is both timely and relevant for several reasons. First, existing scholarship remains limited in its systematic integration of inclusive education discourse with Islamic educational values. Second, there is an urgent need for research that offers both theoretical insights and practical guidance to support the development of a more inclusive and equitable Islamic education system. Accordingly, this study seeks to examine and analyze the concept of inclusive education from an Islamic educational perspective as a means of ensuring the fulfillment of every child's right to quality education. While previous studies have addressed related themes, such as Yunus, Zakso, Priyadi, and Hartoyo (2023), who focused primarily on the pedagogical practices of the Prophet Muhammad, and Zainal, Azura, Putri, and Sari (2025), who examined the formal legal alignment between Islamic law and Indonesian educational regulations, this research makes a distinct contribution. Unlike earlier works, the present study integrates contemporary implementation challenges within the Indonesian context with a theological analysis informed by post-pandemic educational data. By synthesizing library-based research with a critical examination of existing systemic barriers, this study aims to offer a more holistic framework that bridges Islamic ethical ideals and the practical realities of inclusive education in the digital era.

Research Method

This study adopted a qualitative research design based on library research and employed documentation techniques to collect, examine, and synthesize relevant scholarly sources. To ensure academic rigor, explicit inclusion criteria were applied in the selection of literature. Sources were chosen according to their thematic relevance to inclusive education and Islamic theology, with particular emphasis on peer-reviewed journal articles, authoritative textbooks, and official government regulations. A temporal limitation was also imposed to ensure that the analysis remained situated within contemporary educational and policy contexts.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, which involved a systematic process of data reduction, categorization, and thematic interpretation. The materials were organized into coherent chapters and subchapters according to their conceptual focus, including theological foundations, historical development, and implementation challenges of inclusive education. Deductive reasoning was subsequently applied to examine the alignment between universal Islamic principles, such as *al-musāwāh* (equality) and *al-ʿadl* (justice), and the operational requirements of modern inclusive education systems. Through a critical comparison of normative Islamic ideals and current empirical evidence, this study constructed a comprehensive analytical framework to address existing gaps in the fulfillment of children's rights within the Indonesian educational context.

Results and Discussion

History of Inclusive Education

The development of inclusive education worldwide was initially pioneered in Scandinavian countries, particularly Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. In the United States, during the 1960s, President John F. Kennedy dispatched special education experts to Scandinavian countries to study the concepts of mainstreaming and the least restrictive environment, which were later found to be suitable for implementation within the American education system. Subsequently, the United Kingdom began to introduce the concept of inclusive education, marked by a paradigm shift in educational provision for children with special needs, from segregated educational models, which separated learners from the general population, to integrative or comprehensive models (Saputra, 2016).

The global demand for the implementation of inclusive education became increasingly prominent following the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 and the World Conference on Education held in Bangkok in 1991, which resulted in the declaration of Education for All. This declaration imposed a moral and policy obligation on participating nations to ensure that all children, without exception, including children with special needs, received appropriate educational services. As a continuation of the Bangkok Declaration, the World Conference on Special Needs Education was convened in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994, giving rise to what became known as the Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education. The statement emphasized several core principles: (a) all children should learn together; (b) education should be based on learners' individual needs; and (c) special support services should be provided for children with special needs within regular schools, in accordance with global trends toward inclusive education (Saputra, 2016).

In 2004, Indonesia convened a national convention that resulted in the Bandung Declaration, which affirmed the country's commitment to inclusive education as a means of advocating for the rights of children with learning disabilities. Subsequently, in 2005, an international symposium held in Bukittinggi produced the Bukittinggi Recommendations, which emphasized the continued development of inclusive education programs as a

strategic approach to ensuring that all children received quality, appropriate education and care. Drawing on global developments in inclusive education, the Government of the Republic of Indonesia began systematically developing inclusive education programs in the early 2000s. These initiatives represented a continuation and refinement of the integrated education programs that had been introduced in Indonesia during the 1980s but had experienced limited development. Since the early 2000s, these efforts were revitalized in alignment with international trends through the adoption of the inclusive education paradigm (Saputra, 2016).

The progression toward inclusive education for children with special needs in Indonesia had, in fact, begun much earlier. As early as the 1960s, initial steps were taken when several graduates of a special school for the blind in Bandung were successfully admitted to mainstream schools, despite initial resistance from school administrators. Over time, public perceptions of disability gradually shifted, and an increasing number of general schools became willing to enroll students with visual impairments. In the late 1970s, the government began to recognize the importance of integrated education, leading to the issuance of the Minister of Education Decree No. 002/U/1986 concerning Integrated Education for Children with Disabilities. However, following the conclusion of the integrated education project, its implementation declined, particularly at the elementary school level. Renewed efforts to advance inclusive education emerged in the late 1990s through collaborative initiatives between the Ministry of National Education and the Norwegian government, managed by Braillo Norway in partnership with the Directorate of Special Education (Saputra, 2016).

Understanding Inclusive Education

Inclusive education was understood as an educational service system that required children with special needs to attend the nearest schools and learn in regular classrooms alongside peers of the same age. Inclusion was defined as a continuous process of responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing their participation in learning, culture, and community life, while reducing exclusion from and within education. This approach involved systematic changes and modifications in educational content, teaching approaches, institutional structures, and instructional strategies, guided by a shared vision that encompassed all children within an appropriate age range and recognized the responsibility of education systems to meet diverse learning needs. The implementation of inclusive education aimed to create learning environments in which students with special needs could learn, play, and interact with all learners in an equitable manner. Each student with special needs was provided with an individualized learning program designed to support the optimal development of their full potential in accordance with their abilities (Sahrudin, Djafri, & Sukung, 2023).

Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System affirmed that every citizen had an equal right to quality education. Within this legal framework, inclusive education was positioned as an embodiment of equality and non-discrimination, enabling children with special needs and their peers to access the same educational opportunities. Inclusive education was organized to accommodate both the strengths and limitations of

learners with special needs by fostering a supportive, welcoming, and child-friendly learning environment that promoted self-confidence and ensured the fulfillment of students' educational rights. Its successful implementation depended on collaborative efforts among multiple stakeholders, including the government, schools, communities, and parents. In practice, children with special needs were not granted special treatment or exclusive rights; rather, they were afforded equal rights and obligations comparable to those of other learners. Consequently, the effective implementation of inclusive education represented a shared responsibility and a significant challenge for both educational institutions and the broader community (Sahrudin, Djafri, & Suling, 2023).

Children with special needs were defined as children who, during their growth and developmental processes, experienced physical, mental, intellectual, social, and emotional differences or deviations compared to other children of the same age, thereby requiring specialized educational services. When children with special needs were enrolled in regular schools that implemented the National Standard Curriculum without appropriate special education support, they often encountered significant difficulties in understanding instructional content. Such conditions increased the risk of grade repetition and school dropout, ultimately limiting their opportunities to continue their education (Sahrudin, Djafri, & Suling, 2023).

Inclusive education was conceptualized as an educational service system that required children with special needs to attend the nearest regular schools and learn in the same classrooms as their age peers. Within this framework, inclusive education aimed to integrate children with special needs into shared learning environments alongside typically developing students in regular schools located closest to their place of residence. According to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 70 of 2009 concerning Inclusive Education, inclusive education was defined as an educational system that provided opportunities for all learners with disabilities, as well as those with exceptional intelligence and/or special talents, to participate in education and learning within the same educational environment as other students (Sahrudin, Djafri, & Suling, 2023).

Principles of Inclusive Education

Every child was recognized as unique, and these individual differences were viewed as strengths that enabled learners to develop their respective potentials. The fundamental principle of inclusive education was that all children, without exception, were capable of learning. Learning was understood as a collaborative process involving teachers, parents, and the wider community. Consequently, the effective implementation of inclusive education required shifts in mindset as well as adjustments in technical arrangements, educational policies, school culture, classroom management, and the application of adaptation principles (Arriani, Agustiawati, Rizki, Widiyanti, Wibowo, & Herawati, 2021).

The principle of adaptation in inclusive education required schools to address three interrelated dimensions: curricular, instructional, and environmental (ecological). Curricular adaptation referred to modifications in learning content, instructional materials, or targeted competencies to meet students' diverse needs. Instructional

adaptation involved adjustments in teaching methods, approaches, and strategies that enabled students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Environmental adaptation focused on the learning context, including where, when, and with whom learning occurred, as well as the availability of appropriate learning aids and resources aligned with students' needs. Within curricular adaptation, teachers could add specific skills to support the achievement of expected competencies or substitute certain skills with equivalent alternatives (Arriani, Agustiwati, Rizki, Widiyanti, Wibowo, & Herawati, 2021).

Another form of adaptation involved simplifying targeted competencies based on students' initial abilities, conditions, and learning modalities, as identified through assessment results. Accordingly, schools implementing inclusive education were required to: (1) demonstrate flexibility and innovation; (2) ensure the development and enforcement of inclusive school policies; (3) adjust curricula by designing whole-class instructional plans, establishing clear and open learning objectives, employing alternative teaching strategies, utilizing appropriate technologies, and conducting thorough instructional preparation; (4) adapt curricula by ensuring a supportive physical environment and fostering a positive and inclusive school climate; and (5) promote collaboration through teamwork among educators and other stakeholders (Arriani, Agustiwati, Rizki, Widiyanti, Wibowo, & Herawati, 2021).

Several key principles were identified as essential considerations in the implementation of inclusive education:

Classroom Diversity as a Source of Educational Enrichment

Classroom diversity was viewed as a natural and valuable condition of the educational environment. Each child was recognized as unique, and every group of learners was characterized by differences in experiences, cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and values. Although diversity presented challenges for teachers, students, and parents, it also created opportunities to strengthen interpersonal relationships and promote personal, social, and academic development. Teachers in inclusive schools were therefore required to understand and embrace classroom diversity and to utilize students' varied knowledge and experiences as resources for addressing these challenges.

Strengths-Based and Individualized Curriculum

A strengths-based approach was considered a fundamental principle of inclusive education, grounded in the recognition that every child possessed inherent abilities and talents. Students' strengths and individual needs were integrated into curriculum planning and implementation, particularly within instructional processes. The application of a strengths-based and individualized curriculum enhanced student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement by acknowledging diversity and facilitating personalized learning opportunities.

Student Involvement and Student Organizations

Student participation was regarded as a significant factor influencing the success of inclusive education in schools. Teachers were encouraged to actively seek students'

perspectives to enable meaningful contributions to classroom activities. In addition, existing student organizations within schools were utilized as platforms to support inclusive practices and student engagement.

Engagement and Collaboration with All Stakeholders

Inclusive education was understood as an approach that provided equitable opportunities for learners with diverse abilities to grow and learn. Active involvement of parents, students, and other stakeholders was therefore essential. Through continuous formative and summative assessments, parents and students gained access to accurate information regarding learning progress. Schools adopted a positive feedback approach in reporting student outcomes to foster favorable community perceptions and to strengthen awareness of inclusive and supportive school cultures.

Teacher Commitment, Knowledge, and Practical Skills

The effective implementation of inclusive education required teachers to demonstrate strong commitment, comprehensive knowledge, and practical instructional skills. Teaching in inclusive classrooms was guided by the “3-H” approach: heart (commitment), head (critical knowledge), and hand (practical strategies). Teachers were expected to commit to educating all students, employ effective and engaging teaching strategies, and possess the professional knowledge and skills necessary to address diverse abilities and learning styles (Arriani, Agustawati, Rizki, Widiyanti, Wibowo, & Herawati, 2021).

Children's Rights and Protection in Islamic Education

Education was regarded as a fundamental right of every child, including those enrolled in Islamic educational institutions. In Islam, education was considered a crucial means of shaping a child's character, morality, and overall personality. However, beyond the provision of education, Islamic teachings also emphasized the importance of safeguarding children's rights and ensuring their protection. A comprehensive understanding of children's nature and potential was viewed as a prerequisite for the effective fulfillment of their rights, which were to be upheld within both the family and the broader community (Sanusi, Saprin, & Ondeng, 2024). Rights were defined as inherent entitlements possessed by all human beings in their entirety. Human rights, in particular, were understood as rights that individuals held simply by virtue of being human, independent of social recognition or positive law. These rights existed because of human dignity itself, rather than being granted by societal structures or legal systems (Alawiyah & Hasan, 2022).

Within the Islamic framework, children were recognized as bearers of rights that parents and society were obligated to fulfill from the moment of their birth (Lisawati, 2017). Islam was understood as a comprehensive system that regulated all aspects of human life proportionately and justly. In Islamic jurisprudence, one of the most fundamental rights related to a child's development was the right to education (Haqq al-Ta'lim). The pursuit of knowledge was positioned not merely as a social privilege, but as a

religious obligation (*fard*) that applied universally, transcending physical, mental, and social differences. This principle was rooted in the prophetic tradition stating that the pursuit of knowledge was obligatory for every Muslim, without exception, including individuals with disabilities. In the context of inclusive education, this right underscored the notion that a child's physical condition or functional limitations did not diminish their entitlement to quality education. This perspective shifted educational practice from a charity-based approach toward a rights-based paradigm, in which educational institutions were religiously and ethically mandated to create learning environments that accommodated the diverse potentials of all learners. By prioritizing *Haqq al-Ta'lim*, Islamic education reinforced the principle that intellectual and spiritual development constituted a universal human right, thereby ensuring that children with special needs were recognized as valued members of the *ummah* rather than marginalized individuals.

The second fundamental right was the right of children to receive religious education from an early age, as children were regarded as the greatest trust (*amānah*) bestowed by God upon parents. Consequently, instilling knowledge of God, the Prophets, and the Angels from an early stage was considered an essential parental responsibility. This obligation was grounded in the Qur'anic injunction found in Q.S. At-Tahrim (66:6), which commanded believers to protect themselves and their families from the Fire, emphasizing parental accountability in guiding and safeguarding their children's spiritual and moral development.

The third right concerned a child's entitlement to care and affection from parents, particularly from the mother, as parental love was understood to play a decisive role in shaping a child's character and psychological well-being. Beyond affection, children also possessed the right to receive sustained support from their parents, especially the father, who bore primary responsibility for the family. The family was recognized as the first and most influential environment in a child's development, as children grew and matured under parental guidance and protection. Parents were therefore regarded as the primary educators in the formation of a child's personality. Through appropriate care and education, children were expected to develop adaptive capacities that enabled them to interact effectively with their social environment. Parenting, in this context, extended beyond supervision and basic care to encompass moral instruction, the cultivation of positive habits, and the development of responsibility and discipline (Sanusi, Saprin, & Ondeng, 2024). Child protection within Islamic education was understood to operate through two interrelated stages. The first stage began with the fundamental perception of children themselves. This perspective reflected how children were conceptualized as human beings, whether they were viewed as weak and passive individuals subject to arbitrary treatment, or as dignified persons endowed with rights and inherent potential deserving of respect and development. Such perceptions were strongly shaped by cultural norms, religious beliefs, educational backgrounds, and individual life experiences.

The second stage of child protection was reflected in the manner in which children were treated. Within educational settings, such treatment was manifested through the learning approaches and pedagogical practices employed by teachers. Whether educators

adopted participatory methods that respected each child's uniqueness or instead implemented rigid and discriminatory systems, and whether schools provided accessibility for children with special needs or excluded them from admission, were considered concrete indicators of either protection or violation of children's rights. In this regard, practices that denied participation, accessibility, or dignity were understood as forms of child abuse. The responsibility for safeguarding children's rights within Islamic education was shared among parents, educators, the community, and the state. Moreover, child protection in Islamic education encompassed not only educational access but also the broader dimensions of safety and well-being (Natsir, Rofi'i, & Ma'rufah, 2024). Children were expected to experience a sense of safety within educational environments, free from all forms of violence, harassment, and intimidation. Teachers and school personnel were required to ensure children's physical and psychological security and to protect them from discrimination, coercion, or inappropriate treatment. In this context, education was understood as a means of optimally fulfilling children's rights in a manner consistent with their inherent human dignity.

Inclusive Education from the Perspective of Islamic Education

Inclusive education from an Islamic perspective was understood as the application of an educational approach that valued diversity and affirmed the right of every child, including those with special needs, to receive appropriate and equitable education in accordance with Qur'anic teachings. Its philosophical foundation lay in the belief that human beings were created with inherent differences in order to know and complement one another, and that human dignity was determined by devotion to God rather than by physical attributes or social background (Ririanti, Awalia, & Sari, 2025). Islamic teachings affirmed that all human beings possessed equal dignity, with distinctions based solely on levels of faith and piety. The Qur'an explicitly prohibited acts of ridicule and discrimination, as stated in Surah Al-Ḥujurāt (49:11), a principle further reinforced by prophetic traditions narrated by Abu Hurairah. Human worth was therefore measured by individual capacity and moral conduct rather than by physical or cognitive conditions. In the educational context, this perspective implied that no distinction should be made between students with special needs and their peers, as access to quality education constituted a fundamental right for all children. Every individual was understood to possess inherent potential that could be developed optimally through education, regardless of physical condition or learning differences (Utomo, Assayyidi, & Fikri, 2024).

The effective implementation of inclusive education required the active participation of parents, communities, and relevant stakeholders. Collaborative partnerships between families, schools, and society were considered essential in ensuring the provision of inclusive educational services. At the policy level, the government was encouraged to avoid dichotomous approaches in both administrative and substantive aspects of inclusive education. Administrative policies encompassed regulations related to student admissions, educational funding, facilities and infrastructure, and the provision of qualified educational personnel, while substantive policies included evaluation systems, promotion criteria, and teaching-learning processes (Khayati, 2025). The teaching and

learning process was expected to return to the fundamental essence of education, namely the identification and development of each student's unique potential. Within this framework, teachers functioned as facilitators who guided learners with compassion and understanding. Such an approach represented an effort to restore a culture of collective responsibility for education, countering the growing perception that education was solely the responsibility of the state and that community participation was limited to financial contributions. By emphasizing shared responsibility and ethical commitment, inclusive education in Islam sought to revitalize societal concern for educational equity and human development (Hasanah, Asbari, & Wardah, 2024).

Inclusive education was understood to require sustained community support and active participation in order to be successfully implemented. Children with special needs were more likely to participate in either regular or special educational settings when supported not only by their parents but also by the wider community (Irawati & Winario, 2020). In this regard, various stakeholders played a crucial role in supporting schools through the provision of facilities and infrastructure, learning resources, financial assistance, technical support, and employment opportunities for qualified graduates. Consequently, there was a need to further explore integrative efforts that linked inclusive education with the principles and practices of Islamic education. On this basis, several key factors were identified that underpinned the relevance and convergence between inclusive education and Islamic education. First, both educational paradigms shared strong normative foundations derived from the Qur'an and the Hadith, which could serve as authoritative references for the implementation of inclusive education. These foundations included: (1) The principle that human beings were created with diversity to foster mutual understanding and social inclusion, and that true human dignity in the sight of Allah was determined by piety rather than physical or social distinctions (Q.S. Al-Ḥujurāt: 13). (2) The Qur'anic narrative in which Allah admonished the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) for turning away from a blind man, as recounted in Q.S. 'Abasa (80:1–16), emphasizing respect and attention toward persons with disabilities. (3) The prophetic tradition asserting that Allah did not judge human beings by their physical appearance, but by their hearts and deeds, and that no individual possessed inherent superiority over another (narrated by Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal) (Utomo, Assayyidi, & Fikri, 2024).

Collectively, these normative sources reinforced the ethical and theological foundations of inclusive education within Islamic thought, affirming equality, dignity, and social responsibility as core principles in the organization of equitable educational systems.

Second, inclusive education and Islamic education were interconnected through a shared philosophical structure that linked the two paradigms. Several key points of convergence were identified as follows:

Education as an Obligation and a Right

From an Islamic perspective, education was understood as a fundamental obligation, serving as a prerequisite for comprehending other religious duties and for the

development of culture and civilization. From the inclusive education perspective, education was framed as a basic human right. While these formulations differed in emphasis, they did not contradict one another; rather, they reflected distinct perspectives on the same essential substance. The notion of “education as a right” adopted a more anthropocentric orientation, whereas “education as an obligation” reflected a theocentric worldview.

The Principle of Education for All

This second point of convergence emerged as a direct implication of the first. Inclusive education, as previously discussed, stemmed from the principle of education as a human right, which was institutionalized in global educational policy through the “Education for All” movement in the 1990s. Similarly, Islamic education, particularly during the classical period, fostered an environment conducive to education for all through the establishment and expansion of strong traditions of literacy and learning.

The Principle of Non-Segregation

The third point of convergence also followed from the conception of education as both a right and an obligation. When education was understood in this manner, no individual could be legitimately marginalized or excluded from accessing educational opportunities. Consequently, both inclusive and Islamic education rejected segregation and emphasized equal access to educational services.

A Holistic Perspective on Learners

Both Islamic education and inclusive education adopted a holistic approach to human development by recognizing and nurturing the diverse strengths and potential of each learner. Education was not limited to cognitive achievement alone but was directed toward the comprehensive development of personality, character, and capability.

An External Orientation toward Learning Barriers

The fifth point of convergence arose from the first and fourth principles. Because the development of students’ potential was prioritized, learning barriers were understood to originate primarily from external factors, particularly within the educational environment. As a result, responsibility for addressing learning challenges was shifted away from the individual learner and toward systemic transformation within schools and educational institutions (Utomo, Assayyidi, & Fikri, 2024).

Essentially, Islam was understood as a mercy for the entire universe (rahmatan lil ‘alamin). At the same time, Islam functioned as a comprehensive guide for human beings in shaping their lives. This principle was equally applicable to education (Alhasbi, Fathurrahman, & Ahmad, 2024). Education played a vital role in human life, as it contributed significantly to the formation of high-quality personalities characterized by strong moral values and exemplary conduct, thereby enabling individuals to serve as role models within society and to develop into well-rounded human beings.

From an Islamic perspective, this understanding emphasized the importance of an educational system that did not discriminate among individuals. The obligation to seek knowledge was not confined to particular groups, social classes, or genders. Rather, both men and women were afforded equal rights and opportunities to learn and to pursue knowledge (Zahara, Putri, Nurkarimah, Wismanto, & Fadhly, 2024). Consequently, education was required to be just and accessible to all members of society. Every individual, including those with special needs, possessed equal opportunities to engage in learning. This principle was reinforced in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Hujurat (13), in which Allah affirmed the equality of human beings before Him.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Translation:

"O people, indeed We have created you from a man and a woman. Then, We made you into nations and tribes so that you might know each other. Indeed, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most pious. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Compliant".

Based on Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13, it was understood that human dignity originated from a common ancestor, namely Prophet Adam and Eve, despite differences in tribes and nations. Since Allah SWT created human beings into diverse nations and tribes, diversity was regarded as a natural law of creation. However, this diversity did not imply that humans were meant to feel superior to one another, nor did it justify hostility or discrimination. Instead, Allah SWT intended diversity to serve as an opportunity for all human beings to know and understand one another (li ta'ārafū) (Ririanti, Awalia, & Sari, 2025). Within this framework, Allah SWT viewed piety (taqwa) as the sole indicator of human nobility. The greater a person's piety toward Allah SWT, the higher their status in the sight of Allah SWT. Consequently, distinctions based on ethnicity, nationality, gender, or physical condition were not considered determinants of human worth, as Allah SWT assessed human dignity exclusively through piety.

In the context of Islamic religious education for students with special needs in inclusive schools, learning was implemented through a competency-based model that aimed to develop students' abilities by integrating various learning environments and combining general and specific instructional principles (Rinaldho, Pratama, Ramadhan, Wismanto, & Nuradillah, 2024). Therefore, it was concluded that inclusive education did not conflict with Islamic teachings or with the principles of Islamic education, particularly regarding education and human differences. Islam itself mandated education and emphasized the obligation to seek knowledge for all Muslims, both men and women, regardless of their physical conditions.

All individuals were thus recognized as having equal opportunities and rights in education. Furthermore, it was emphasized that Allah SWT did not differentiate between human beings based on lineage or physical form, but rather evaluated human nobility solely on the basis of piety. The implementation of inclusive education was found to

encourage positive changes in students, particularly in shaping attitudes toward diversity and difference. Through shared learning experiences and inclusive educational practices, students developed greater acceptance, ultimately contributing to the formation of non-discriminatory and inclusive communities capable of accommodating all individuals (Ririanti, Awalia, & Sari, 2025). Thus, the implementation of inclusive education within Islamic education was regarded as an effort to create a fair and equitable learning environment for all students. By adhering to Islamic values that emphasized equality and justice, supported by curriculum adaptations, teacher training, and community involvement, inclusive education was able to be implemented more effectively. Existing challenges were addressed through collaboration among multiple stakeholders and through the utilization of innovative technologies.

The primary goal of inclusive education was to provide the widest possible opportunities for all students with physical, emotional, mental, and social disabilities, as well as those with intellectual or special talents, to receive quality education tailored to their individual needs and abilities (Utami, 2022). The presence of inclusive education was found to reduce discrimination against children with special needs (*Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus/ABK*) and to foster a more open, respectful, and empathetic mindset among members of society. Therefore, inclusive education was not merely an alternative educational program, but rather a transformative movement that shifted societal paradigms regarding difference and diversity. Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values with the Indonesian inclusive education system was required to move beyond theoretical alignment toward a practical, value-driven synergy. Research findings indicated that although Indonesia possessed a strong legal framework supporting inclusive education, a significant “missing link” in implementation often lay in the ethical commitment of educational stakeholders. Islam, as an inherently inclusive religion, had established the foundations of human rights and universal access to knowledge centuries prior to modern international conventions (al-Shafe’i, 2013). By positioning inclusion as a religious mandate (*dakwah*) rather than solely as a legal obligation, the Indonesian education system was better positioned to cultivate a more organic, ethical, and sustainable educational environment for students with special needs.

Conclusion

Inclusive education was defined as an educational system that provided opportunities for all children, including children with special needs (*Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus/ABK*), to learn together in regular schools without discrimination. Its fundamental principle was the acceptance and respect of diversity, accompanied by the provision of educational services tailored to the individual needs of each learner. The core assumption underlying the implementation of inclusive education was that all children, without exception, were capable of learning. Learning was viewed as a collaborative process involving teachers, parents, and the wider community. Consequently, the effective implementation of inclusive education required changes in mindset, technical arrangements, educational policies, institutional culture, classroom management

practices, and the application of appropriate adaptation principles. In Islamic teachings, every child was understood to possess inherent rights that were obligatory for parents to fulfill. These rights were attached to the child from birth, reflecting Islam's comprehensive regulation of human life according to justice and balance. Within the educational context, children were expected to feel safe and protected, free from all forms of violence, harassment, or abuse.

Teachers and school staff were responsible for ensuring children's safety, both physically and psychologically, and for protecting them from discrimination, intimidation, and inappropriate treatment. Education, therefore, was directed toward the optimal fulfillment of children's rights in accordance with their inherent human dignity.

Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values with the Indonesian inclusive education system was required to move beyond mere theoretical alignment toward a practical and value-driven synergy. Research findings indicated that although Indonesia possessed a strong legal framework supporting inclusive education, the primary "missing link" in its implementation often lay in the ethical commitment of educational stakeholders. Islam, as an inherently inclusive religion, had established the foundations of human rights and universal access to knowledge long before the emergence of modern international conventions. By positioning inclusion as a religious mandate (*dakwah*), rather than solely as a legal obligation, the Indonesian education system was better able to foster a more organic, ethical, and sustainable educational environment for students with special needs.

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Ethical Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards in educational research. As a library-based qualitative study utilizing secondary data from publicly accessible documents, reports, and scholarly publications, it did not involve human participants, personal data, or sensitive information. Therefore, ethical approval from an institutional review board was not required. The author ensured academic integrity by appropriately citing all sources and avoiding plagiarism, misrepresentation, or data manipulation throughout the research process.

CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

- **Author 1:** Conceptualization; Methodology; Original Draft.
- **Author 2:** Conceptualization; Formal Analysis; Review & Editing
- **Author 3:** Methodology; Writing Original Draft.
- **Author 4:** Methodology; Formal Analysis;

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this article.

Data Availability

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available upon reasonable request

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