

Enhancing Social Skills in Physically Disabled Students through Inclusive Social Studies Curriculum in Secondary Schools

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Abstrak

Pendidikan inklusif bertujuan memberikan kesempatan yang setara bagi semua siswa, termasuk siswa tuna daksa, untuk berkembang sesuai potensi mereka. Mata pelajaran IPS berperan penting dalam mengembangkan keterampilan sosial siswa tuna daksa. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis penerapan kurikulum IPS yang inklusif di sekolah menengah dengan fokus pada peningkatan keterampilan sosial siswa tuna daksa. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus, informan terdiri dari guru IPS, guru pendamping khusus, kepala sekolah, siswa tuna daksa, dan teman sebaya. Informan ditentukan secara purposive, dan data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara, observasi, serta studi dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan secara tematik melalui tahap reduksi, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Peningkatan keterampilan sosial diukur melalui indikator seperti kerja sama, kepercayaan diri, serta kemampuan berpendapat dan berinteraksi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kurikulum IPS yang inklusif mampu meningkatkan keterampilan sosial siswa tuna daksa, seperti keterlibatan aktif dalam diskusi, kerja kelompok, dan interaksi sosial. Tantangan dalam penelitian ini yaitu keterbatasan pemahaman guru dan sarana pendukung. Temuan ini diharapkan dapat menjadi rujukan dalam pengembangan kurikulum IPS yang lebih inklusif dan responsif terhadap kebutuhan siswa tuna daksa, guna menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang adil, adaptif, dan memberdayakan di sekolah menengah.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan inklusif, kurikulum IPS, keterampilan sosial, siswa tuna daksa

Abstract

Inclusive education aims to provide equal opportunities for all students, including students with physical disabilities, to develop according to their potential. The Social Studies (IPS) subject plays a vital role in developing the social skills of students with physical disabilities. This study aims to analyze the implementation of an inclusive Social Studies curriculum in secondary schools, with a focus on improving the social skills of students with physical disabilities. Using a qualitative case study approach, the informants consist of Social Studies teachers, special assistant teachers, school principals, students with physical disabilities, and peers. Informants were selected purposively, and data were collected through interviews, observations, and document studies. Data analysis was conducted thematically through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The improvement of social skills was measured through indicators such as cooperation, self-confidence, and the ability to express opinions and interact. The results show that an inclusive Social Studies curriculum can enhance the social skills of students with physical disabilities, such as active participation in discussions, group work, and social interaction. Challenges in this study include limited teacher understanding and lack of supporting facilities. These findings are expected to serve as a reference for developing a more inclusive and responsive Social Studies curriculum that meets the needs of students with physical disabilities to create a fair, adaptive, and empowering learning environment in secondary schools.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Social Studies curriculum, social skills, students with physical disabilities.

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become a key focus in efforts to improve the quality of education for all students, including children with special needs such as students with physical disabilities. Children with physical disabilities are often referred to as physically handicapped, physically impaired, or orthopedically impaired (Luthfi, 2018). Students with physical disabilities are those whose body parts are not fully functional, while the terms "physically handicapped" and "physically impaired" refer specifically to impairments of the body rather than sensory disabilities (Lisma br Manik, 2023; Dahlan, 2022). Essentially, the needs of students with physical disabilities can be classified into three categories: the need for medical services to address health-related issues, the need for rehabilitation and habilitation services to reduce functional impairments caused by physical disabilities, and the need for special education services (Desiningrum, 2016). Children with special needs are categorized into nine groups, including visual impairments (blind), hearing and speech impairments (deaf/mute), intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, behavioral and emotional disorders, specific learning disabilities, slow learners, gifted and talented children (CIBI), and children with autism (Khasanah & Rachmadyanti, 2019). Socio-emotional needs refer to the support required by children with special needs to interact with their social environment, especially during their developmental stages in childhood and adolescence. Meanwhile, educational needs are closely related to the special educational support required based on the type of disability.

Inclusive education is an educational system that provides opportunities for all students—including those with disabilities as well as those with exceptional intelligence or special talents—to participate in education or learning within the same educational environment as their peers (Phytanza et al., 2023). Inclusive education represents the most recent development in the educational model for children with special needs. This was formally affirmed in the 1994 Salamanca Statement at the World Conference on Special Needs Education, which stated that "the fundamental principle of inclusive education is that, as far as possible, all children should learn together, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have."

The physical limitations of children with special needs can affect how they interact with the social world, both in terms of communication and participation in daily activities. Therefore, inclusive education must take into account their specific needs by providing learning strategies that support the development of social and emotional skills (Of, 2024). One way to achieve this goal is through the implementation of an inclusive Social Studies (IPS) curriculum. A Social Studies curriculum designed with consideration for the needs of students with physical disabilities can provide them with opportunities to learn and interact in a supportive environment. As a result, they can develop essential social skills such as communication, cooperation, and empathy, which will assist them in their daily lives and future endeavors (Rahmi Hayati, 2024).

An inclusive Social Studies (IPS) curriculum, tailored to the needs of students with physical disabilities, can serve as a tool to enhance their social skills. By integrating project-based learning methods, group discussions, or social simulations, students can practice how to interact in various social situations. This curriculum aims not only to develop knowledge but also to build character and social competence, both of which are crucial for participation in society. However, the implementation of an inclusive Social Studies curriculum in Indonesian schools still faces several challenges. One of the main issues is the lack of resources, including educational facilities, assistive tools, and teacher competencies in managing inclusive classrooms (Khasanah & Rachmadyanti, 2019). Furthermore, not all schools have adequate understanding or skills to effectively implement an inclusive Social Studies curriculum. Therefore, it is important to explore how the implementation of an inclusive Social Studies curriculum can support the development of social skills in students with physical disabilities and empower them to become more engaged and productive members of society (Prastiwi et al., 2023; Pratiwi & Lestari, 2020).

Although numerous studies have examined children with special needs (particularly those with physical disabilities) (Khasanah & Rachmadyanti, 2019; Lisma br Manik, 2023; Of, 2024; Sari et

al., 2024). There is still a lack of in-depth research that specifically explores the implementation of an inclusive Social Studies curriculum for students with physical disabilities at the secondary school level, especially about the development of their social skills. Most existing studies tend to focus more on academic aspects or physical barriers, while the development of social skills among students with physical disabilities through an inclusive Social Studies approach has received relatively little attention.

Therefore, the focus of this study is to explore strategies for implementing an inclusive Social Studies curriculum to enhance the social skills of students with physical disabilities in secondary schools by highlighting adaptive, participatory, and empathetic teaching practices within an inclusive context. This research aims to integrate a socio-emotional-based learning approach in Social Studies that is specifically designed for students with physical disabilities and to provide practical recommendations based on the Indonesian context for designing an inclusive curriculum that emphasizes not only cognitive development but also social growth and character building (Astuti & Putri, 2024).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the implementation of an inclusive Social Studies curriculum in secondary schools. A qualitative approach was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how the inclusive Social Studies curriculum can enhance the social skills of students with physical disabilities, as well as to explore the challenges faced during the implementation process. Through this approach, the researcher can obtain a more comprehensive and detailed picture of the experiences of both students and teachers within an inclusive educational environment. The research was conducted in two urban secondary schools that have implemented inclusive education for students with physical disabilities. A case study design was selected because it allows for deeper exploration of the specific contexts and conditions in the two schools and to understand how the inclusive Social Studies curriculum is applied within them.

The informants in this study include two Social Studies teachers who teach in inclusive classrooms, five students with physical disabilities participating in inclusive Social Studies learning, two special education support teachers (GPK) who assist students with special needs in class, and the school principal. Data collection techniques consist of interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. Interviews with the Social Studies teachers aim to explore how they design and implement an inclusive Social Studies curriculum, the challenges they face, and the impact they observe on the social skills development of students with physical disabilities. Interviews with students with physical disabilities are conducted to understand their experiences in inclusive Social Studies learning, as well as how they perceive the curriculum's influence on their social skills. Additional interviews are conducted with special education support teachers, the principal, and school supervisors to examine policies, strategies, and systemic support in the implementation of the inclusive curriculum.

Direct observations were conducted during Social Studies learning activities in inclusive classrooms to assess the interactions between students with physical disabilities and their peers, as well as how the learning activities support the development of social skills. These observations also recorded the strategies employed by teachers to accommodate the needs of students with physical disabilities during the lessons. In addition, the researcher analyzed the Social Studies curriculum documents implemented in the two schools, including teaching modules, lesson plans, instructional tools, and learning materials used throughout the teaching process. This was done to evaluate the extent to which the curriculum had been adapted to meet the needs of students with physical disabilities.

The data analysis process in this study employed the interactive data analysis model proposed by dari (Matthew B. Miles & A. Michael Huberman, 2014) which consists of three main stages: (1) Data Reduction: This involves the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming raw data derived from field notes, interview transcripts, and documents. Irrelevant data were eliminated, while relevant data were categorized according to themes aligned with the research focus. (2) Data Display: The reduced data were organized into descriptive narratives, matrices, charts, tables, or models to facilitate conclusion drawing. This stage enabled the researcher to identify patterns and relationships among the data categories. (3) Conclusion Drawing: Preliminary conclusions were developed during the early stages of data collection and were continuously refined throughout the research process. This was done by comparing multiple data sources, aligning them with field findings, and conducting data triangulation to ensure a high level of validity.

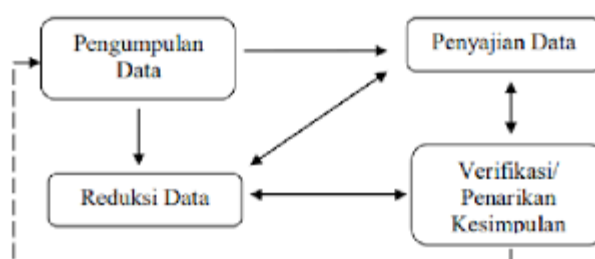


Figure 1. Qualitative Data Analysis Process

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Implementation of an Inclusive Social Studies Curriculum

The research findings indicate that the implementation of an inclusive Social Studies curriculum in two secondary schools has had a positive impact on the development of social skills among students with physical disabilities. Social Studies teachers strive to adapt their teaching strategies to meet students' needs through project-based approaches, group discussions, and social simulation activities that encourage collaboration and peer interaction. Several methods used include:

a. Project-Based Learning:

The Social Studies curriculum is adapted using a project-based learning model, where students work in groups to solve problems or explore social topics. Project-based learning allows students with physical disabilities to interact and collaborate with their classmates, which is crucial for developing their social skills. Students with physical disabilities, who were previously less involved in group activities, have now begun to actively participate in group discussions and presentations.

b. Use of Educational Technology:

Teachers also utilize educational technology to support students with physical disabilities, such as using visual-based learning applications and videos that help them understand abstract concepts in Social Studies. These technological tools are highly beneficial for students with physical limitations as they enable them to engage in learning in a more enjoyable and comprehensible manner.

c. Social Simulations and Group Discussions:

In several learning activities, teachers organize social simulations or role-playing, where students take on specific roles in relevant social situations. This method helps students with physical disabilities practice interacting in various social scenarios and learn about the prevailing social norms in society. Additionally, group discussions involving all

students—both with and without disabilities—strengthen communication and collaboration skills.

2. Challenges in the Implementation of an Inclusive Social Studies Curriculum

Although the implementation of an inclusive Social Studies curriculum has shown positive impacts, several challenges are still encountered by schools and teachers in its application. Some of these challenges include:

a. Limited Facilities and Resources:

One of the main challenges identified in this study is the lack of facilities and resources that support inclusive learning. Some schools still lack assistive educational tools that can facilitate students with physical disabilities, such as hearing aids, computers with screen reader software, or adequate physical accessibility in classrooms. This becomes a barrier to creating a fully inclusive environment for all students.

b. Limited Teacher Understanding:

Although Social Studies teachers in both schools studied are committed to implementing an inclusive curriculum, not all of them possess in-depth knowledge of the best practices for teaching students with special needs. Some teachers still struggle to adapt their teaching methods to the needs of students with physical disabilities, especially in terms of providing individualized attention to those who require additional support.

c. Social Stigma and Lack of Awareness Among Students:

Despite increasing interaction between students with physical disabilities and their peers, some non-disabled students still show hesitation or are not fully accepting of students with physical disabilities in social activities. This indicates that although an inclusive Social Studies curriculum has been implemented, education on equality and appreciation of diversity still needs to be strengthened among students.

3. Enhancing the Social Skills of Students with Physical Disabilities

One of the main objectives of implementing an inclusive Social Studies curriculum is to enhance the social skills of students with physical disabilities. Social skills refer to an individual's ability to interact effectively with others in various social situations, which is crucial for community life. In the context of this study, social skills are analyzed based on three key aspects: communication skills, cooperation skills, and empathy skills—each with observable indicators demonstrated during the learning process.:

- 1. Communication Skills:** This aspect includes students' ability to express ideas, listen to others, and respond appropriately in social interactions. Students began actively expressing their opinions during group discussions and showed improvement in their confidence to speak in front of the class. Additionally, they demonstrated appropriate verbal or non-verbal responses to their peers' opinions. Students with physical disabilities, who were previously more passive, have now shown increased confidence in openly sharing ideas and asking questions, both to teachers and classmates, especially during discussions and Q&A sessions in Social Studies lessons.
- 2. Collaboration in Groups:** This aspect relates to students' ability to actively participate in group activities, complete tasks together, and divide roles fairly. This is evident when students are able to complete group assignments collaboratively, accept and carry out roles within the group, and are willing to help their peers. Through project-based learning, students with physical disabilities have shown improvement in building cooperation, including taking responsibility, giving and receiving help, and establishing healthy social relationships within the group.
- 3. Empathy and Appreciation for Diversity:** This aspect reflects the ability to understand others' feelings, adopt different perspectives, and demonstrate mutual respect. It is evident when students show concern for peers with different conditions, respect differing opinions within a group, and display tolerant and open attitudes in interactions. Through

social simulation activities and reflective learning in Social Studies, students with physical disabilities have shown improvement in understanding the social realities around them. They have become more open to diversity and are increasingly able to show respect and empathy toward others.

By observing these three aspects of social skills along with their indicators, it can be concluded that the implementation of an inclusive Social Studies curriculum has made a tangible contribution to the development of social skills among students with physical disabilities, both in academic settings and in their daily social lives. However, challenges related to insufficient facilities and the need to improve teachers' understanding indicate that the implementation of inclusive education requires greater commitment from various parties, including the government, schools, and the wider community

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the implementation of an inclusive Social Studies curriculum has proven effective in enhancing the social skills of students with physical disabilities, particularly in terms of communication, collaboration, and empathy. Through varied and adaptive learning approaches, students with disabilities are provided with the opportunity to grow socially within a more equitable learning environment. By using project-based learning methods, educational technology, and social simulations, students with physical disabilities are able to develop communication, cooperation, and empathy skills—essential aspects of life in society.

Nevertheless, several challenges must be addressed in implementing an inclusive curriculum, including limited facilities and resources to support inclusive learning, a lack of teacher understanding in managing inclusive classrooms, and the persistence of social stigma among non-disabled students.

Therefore, inclusive education requires comprehensive support from schools, the government, and society to truly create a learning environment that is welcoming to all. An inclusive curriculum is not only a learning tool but also a key to building a just, inclusive society that values diversity.

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