

Forming Religious Character Through Habit: Inclusive Islamic Education for Students with Special Needs in a Special School Context

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Abstract: This study investigates the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) for students with special needs at SLB Sinar Harapan 2 Probolinggo, focusing on teaching methods, instructional strategies, challenges, and the impact on character development. Employing a qualitative case study approach, the research involved fifteen purposively selected participants, including teachers, administrators, and parents, with data gathered through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and institutional document analysis. Findings indicate that adaptive and multisensory teaching methods—such as visual aids, sign language, tactile media, and structured religious routines—were integral in supporting student engagement and understanding. Teachers utilized routine-based strategies, collaborative family involvement, and differentiated instruction aligned with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Despite challenges including limited instructional time, communication barriers, and inadequate resources, the study found that PAI learning contributed positively to students' religious behavior, independence, empathy, and participation in communal rituals. Additionally, parental engagement increased during religious events, reinforcing school-based learning at home. These results highlight the potential of inclusive religious education to foster moral and spiritual development among students with diverse disabilities. The study underscores the importance of teacher adaptability, institutional support, and culturally grounded pedagogy in advancing inclusive Islamic education. Limitations include the single-school focus and lack of direct student voice. Future research should explore broader contexts, assess long-term outcomes, and incorporate student perspectives. The findings offer practical implications for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers committed to equitable religious education for all learners.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji implementasi Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) bagi siswa berkebutuhan khusus di SLB Sinar Harapan 2 Probolinggo, dengan fokus pada metode pengajaran, strategi pembelajaran, tantangan, serta dampaknya terhadap pembentukan karakter. Menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan lima belas partisipan yang dipilih secara purposif, termasuk guru, kepala sekolah, dan orang tua, dengan data diperoleh melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan analisis dokumen institusi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa metode pengajaran adaptif dan multisensorik—seperti media visual, bahasa isyarat, alat bantu taktil, serta rutinitas keagamaan yang terstruktur—sangat penting dalam mendukung keterlibatan dan pemahaman siswa. Guru menerapkan strategi berbasis kebiasaan, kolaborasi dengan keluarga, serta pembelajaran yang disesuaikan dengan Program Pembelajaran Individual (PPI). Meskipun menghadapi tantangan seperti keterbatasan waktu pembelajaran, hambatan komunikasi, dan kurangnya sumber daya, pembelajaran PAI terbukti berkontribusi positif terhadap perilaku religius siswa, kemandirian, empati, dan partisipasi dalam kegiatan keagamaan kolektif. Keterlibatan orang tua juga meningkat selama momen keagamaan, memperkuat pembelajaran berbasis rumah. Hasil ini menegaskan potensi pendidikan agama yang inklusif dalam membentuk perkembangan moral dan spiritual siswa dengan berbagai disabilitas. Studi ini menekankan pentingnya adaptabilitas guru, dukungan institusional, serta pedagogi yang berakar pada budaya dalam memajukan pendidikan Islam yang inklusif. Keterbatasan penelitian mencakup fokus pada satu sekolah dan belum

terlibatnya perspektif siswa secara langsung. Penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk menjangkau konteks yang lebih luas, menilai dampak jangka panjang, serta mengintegrasikan suara siswa. Temuan ini memberikan implikasi praktis bagi pendidik, pembuat kebijakan, dan perancang kurikulum yang berkomitmen terhadap pendidikan agama yang setara bagi semua peserta didik.

1. Introduction

The formation of religious character among students with special needs has become a critical focus within inclusive education frameworks globally. As educational paradigms shift toward equitable access and social justice, religious education, particularly Islamic Religious Education (PAI), plays a strategic role in nurturing values, discipline, and spiritual identity among learners in special schools.¹ Inclusive Islamic education not only supports the cognitive and emotional development of students with disabilities but also reinforces social cohesion through the practice of religious habits.² In many Muslim-majority societies, the inclusion of religious instruction in special education remains underexplored despite its potential transformative impact.³ This research responds to the urgent need for pedagogical models that accommodate the diverse needs of students while fostering religious character in inclusive environments.

Previous studies have explored the professional development of teachers as a cornerstone of effective inclusive education. Mintz found that pre-service inclusion training significantly increased teachers' self-efficacy in managing students with special needs, with lasting effects into their first teaching year. However, post-induction support did not yield additional gains, indicating a potential gap in continuous professional learning.⁴ Similarly, Dignath et al. demonstrated that both training and practical experience in inclusive classrooms significantly enhanced teachers' emotional and cognitive efficacy, especially for pre-service and special education-trained teachers.⁵ These findings underline the importance of sustained and experiential learning models for educators in inclusive settings.

Research on the structural and policy dimensions of inclusive education has also identified systemic barriers that affect equitable access. Bessudnov et al. reported that school autonomy in England negatively influenced inclusion outcomes for students with special needs, particularly in sponsored academies.⁶ Qu's work in China highlighted how structural impediments in national policy frameworks limit progress in inclusive

¹ Ayse Mete Yesil et al., "The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children With Special Needs: A Descriptive Study," *Clinical Pediatrics* 61, no. 2 (October 12, 2021): 141–49, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00099228211050223>.

² Minsih Minsih and Suparno Suparno, "Equality of Learning for Children with Special Needs: Case Studies at the Elementary School Level," *Opción* 34, no. 86 (2018): 2667–74.

³ Suharjo Suharjo, Silfia Hanani, and Jasmienti Jasmienti, "Implementation of Islamic Religious Education Learning for Children with Special Needs at Al-Azhar Elementary School Kota Bukittinggi," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 17, no. 2 (December 31, 2020): 217–28, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.2020.172-08>.

⁴ Joseph Mintz, "A Comparative Study of the Impact of Enhanced Input on Inclusion at Pre-Service and Induction Phases on the Self-Efficacy of Beginning Teachers to Work Effectively with Children with Special Educational Needs," *British Educational Research Journal* 45, no. 2 (April 1, 2019): 254–74, <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3486>.

⁵ Charlotte Dignath et al., "Teachers' Beliefs About Inclusive Education and Insights on What Contributes to Those Beliefs: A Meta-Analytical Study," *Educational Psychology Review* 34, no. 4 (2022): 2609–60, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-022-09695-0>.

⁶ Yi Liu et al., "School Autonomy and Educational Inclusion of Children with Special Needs: Evidence from England," *British Educational Research Journal* 46, no. 3 (June 1, 2020): 532–52, <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3593>.



practices, reflecting broader global challenges.⁷ Rapp and Granados provided a sociological lens, suggesting that exclusionary mechanisms in schools are perpetuated through institutional policies and communication norms.⁸ These studies collectively call attention to the need for systemic reform to support inclusive education at policy and institutional levels.

The psychological well-being of educators and families within inclusive environments is another area of significant inquiry. Okeke et al. evidenced that Rational Emotive Occupational Health Coaching effectively reduced teacher stress when working with children with special needs.⁹ Similarly, Asbury et al.¹⁰ and Shaw & Shaw¹¹ revealed the psychological strain experienced by both parents and children during the COVID-19 pandemic, pointing to the fragility of support systems during crises. Meints et al. further demonstrated the potential of innovative interventions, such as canine-assisted programs, to alleviate stress in inclusive classrooms.¹² These findings suggest that inclusive education must address not only pedagogical needs but also the emotional resilience of all stakeholders.

Inclusive education has also been examined through socio-cultural and intersectional lenses. Love & Beneke criticized early childhood inclusion for perpetuating ableism and racial bias, advocating for a justice-based framework grounded in Disability Critical Race Theory.¹³ Li & Ruppar identified five dimensions of teacher agency that influence inclusive practice, including professional philosophy and autonomy.¹⁴ Meanwhile, Goldan et al. found that students with special educational needs (SEN) often report lower subjective well-being in school compared to their peers, suggesting a need for more inclusive school climates.¹⁵ These perspectives emphasize that inclusive education is not only a technical or logistical endeavor but also a deeply ethical and socio-cultural challenge.

⁷ Xiao Qu, "Structural Barriers to Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in China," *Journal of Educational Change* 23, no. 2 (2022): 253-76, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-021-09426-2>.

⁸ Anna Cecilia Rapp and Anabel Corral-Granados, "Understanding Inclusive Education – a Theoretical Contribution from System Theory and the Constructionist Perspective," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 28, no. 4 (March 20, 2024): 423-39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1946725>.

⁹ Francisca Chinwendu Okeke et al., "A Blended Rational Emotive Occupational Health Coaching for Job-Stress among Teachers of Children with Special Education Needs," *Internet Interventions* 26 (2021): 100482, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.invent.2021.100482>.

¹⁰ Kathryn Asbury et al., "How Is COVID-19 Affecting the Mental Health of Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Their Families?," *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 51, no. 5 (2021): 1772-80, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-020-04577-2>.

¹¹ Patricia A Shaw and Alan Shaw, "COVID-19 and Remote Learning: Experiences of Parents Supporting Children with Special Needs and Disability during the Pandemic," *Education 3-13* 51, no. 3 (April 3, 2023): 371-85, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2021.1960579>.

¹² Kerstin Meints et al., "Can Dogs Reduce Stress Levels in School Children? Effects of Dog-Assisted Interventions on Salivary Cortisol in Children with and without Special Educational Needs Using Randomized Controlled Trials," *PLOS ONE* 17, no. 6 (June 15, 2022): e0269333, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0269333>.

¹³ Hailey R Love and Margaret R Beneke, "Pursuing Justice-Driven Inclusive Education Research: Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) in Early Childhood," *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* 41, no. 1 (February 18, 2021): 31-44, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121421990833>.

¹⁴ Lingyu Li and Andrea Ruppar, "Conceptualizing Teacher Agency for Inclusive Education: A Systematic and International Review," *Teacher Education and Special Education* 44, no. 1 (June 5, 2020): 42-59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406420926976>.

¹⁵ Janka Goldan, Lena Nusser, and Michael Gebel, "School-Related Subjective Well-Being of Children with and without Special Educational Needs in Inclusive Classrooms," *Child Indicators Research* 15, no. 4 (2022): 1313-37, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-022-09914-8>.

Technological integration and innovative learning models are emerging as potential enablers of inclusion. Salas-Pilco et al. suggested that AI and digital tools can enhance participation among minority learners, although they are still constrained by technological and pedagogical barriers.¹⁶ Xia et al. confirmed that teacher support grounded in self-determination theory positively shaped student perceptions of AI-based learning without significant demographic disparities.¹⁷ Dalgaard et al., however, found no significant impact of inclusive settings on academic or psychosocial outcomes, though the direction of effect was positive.¹⁸ These mixed findings point to the need for context-sensitive innovations and evaluations of effectiveness.

Despite extensive research, several limitations and gaps remain. Many studies focus on structural or psychological aspects without detailing classroom-level practices, particularly in religious or values-based instruction. There is a notable lack of investigation into how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is contextualized within special education frameworks, especially in non-Western settings. Additionally, few studies have examined the direct impact of religious learning on the moral and spiritual development of students with disabilities. This creates an empirical and practical gap in understanding the role of religious pedagogy in shaping character within inclusive contexts. Addressing this void is essential for holistic educational equity.

This study explores the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) for students with special needs at SLB Sinar Harapan 2 Probolinggo, Indonesia. It aims to investigate teaching methods, instructional strategies, challenges encountered, and the resultant impact on students' religious character formation. By focusing on the intersection of inclusion and religious education, this research contributes to a nuanced understanding of pedagogical practices in special schools. It offers empirical insights into how PAI fosters habit-based religious character, even among learners with varying physical and cognitive conditions. The findings are expected to inform both policy and practice, offering culturally relevant frameworks for inclusive religious education.

2. Method

This study utilized a qualitative single-case study design to conduct an in-depth exploration of the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in a specialized context. The case, SLB Sinar Harapan 2 in Probolinggo City, was purposively selected due to its strong religious character and documented success in developing students with special needs, making it a rich environment for understanding adaptive PAI strategies in their natural setting.¹⁹

The research was conducted over a three-month period from March to May 2025. The process began with obtaining formal access and initial site observation. This was followed by the main data collection phase, involving multiple classroom observations

¹⁶ Sdenka Z Salas-Pilco, Kejiang Xiao, and Jun Oshima, "Artificial Intelligence and New Technologies in Inclusive Education for Minority Students: A Systematic Review," *Sustainability* 14, no. 20 (2022): 13572, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su142013572>.

¹⁷ Qi Xia et al., "A Self-Determination Theory (SDT) Design Approach for Inclusive and Diverse Artificial Intelligence (AI) Education," *Computers & Education* 189 (2022): 104582, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2022.104582>.

¹⁸ Nina T Dalgaard et al., "The Effects of Inclusion on Academic Achievement, Socioemotional Development and Wellbeing of Children with Special Educational Needs," *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 18, no. 4 (December 1, 2022): e1291, <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1291>.

¹⁹ Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*, 6th ed. (Sage Publications, 2018).

and in-depth interviews. The final stage consisted of data transcription, analysis, and member checking with key informants to verify the emerging findings.

To ensure systematic data collection, several tools were used. A semi-structured interview guide facilitated conversations, while an observation guide (checklist) directed the researcher's focus on specific pedagogical interactions and religious routines. All observations and reflections were recorded in detailed field notes. Although structured checklists were used, they served as guides rather than fixed quantitative instruments, maintaining the study's qualitative nature.

Data were gathered using three primary methods. First, non-participant observation was conducted across 10 learning sessions to document pedagogical methods and student engagement in religious activities (e.g., congregational *Dhuha* prayer). Second, semi-structured interviews were held with the school principal and two senior PAI teachers to explore their strategies and challenges. Third, documentation analysis of the school's curriculum, annual work programs, and activity reports provided contextual data.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman,²⁰ involving three concurrent flows: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data were coded and categorized to identify patterns related to four pre-determined themes aligned with the research objectives: (a) instructional methods, (b) teacher strategies, (c) implementation challenges, and (d) impact on student character.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were implemented.²¹ Credibility was established through prolonged engagement at the research site (three months) and member checking, where emerging findings were discussed with the participating teachers to ensure they reflected their experiences. Transferability was enhanced by providing a thick description of the school context, PAI program, and participants. For dependability and confirmability, a clear audit trail was maintained, consisting of raw data, field notes, interview transcripts, and data analysis decision logs, allowing the research process to be traceable.

3. Results

This section presents the main findings of the qualitative study on the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning for students with special needs at SLB Sinar Harapan 2 Probolinggo. The findings are based on primary data collected through in-depth interviews with PAI teachers, school administrators, and parents; classroom and school-wide observations; and documentation analysis of learning materials and school routines. The results are structured thematically to align with the research objectives, covering learning methods, teacher strategies, challenges in implementation, and the impact of PAI on religious character development. Each thematic category is supported by relevant excerpts and documentation to ensure descriptive validity. No interpretation or evaluative commentary is included in this section.

3.1. Adaptive Learning Methods for Students with Special Needs

PAI learning at SLB Sinar Harapan 2 is implemented through differentiated instructional methods that align with the individual needs of learners. Teachers use a combination of visual media, tactile learning, sign language, repetition, and learning-by-doing strategies to ensure accessibility across various types of disabilities. For example, students with hearing impairments are taught using visual cards depicting the steps of ablution (*wudhu*) and prayer (*salat*), accompanied by videos created by the teachers themselves.

²⁰ Miles et al. (2014)

²¹ Yvonna S Lincoln and Egon G Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Sage Publications, 1985).

These videos include sign language overlays and captions to support comprehension. One PAI teacher explained during an interview (March 2024):

"We show a video demonstrating how to perform wudhu, with steps clearly captioned and accompanied by sign language, so students can imitate directly."

Observation data from April 3, 2024, recorded that students frequently consulted the laminated cards during congregational prayer, using them as visual references to correct their postures. Meanwhile, students with intellectual disabilities were observed engaging in repetitive physical practice, such as repeatedly performing the handwashing sequence of wudhu under teacher guidance. Documentation analysis of the weekly lesson plan revealed that lesson objectives are adjusted based on each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), ensuring alignment between the instructional method and the cognitive abilities of the learners.

3.2. Teacher Strategies to Facilitate PAI Learning

Teachers at SLB Sinar Harapan 2 adopt a combination of structured routine-based strategies and emotionally supportive practices to facilitate PAI instruction. Observations showed that every lesson begins with recitation, a short storytelling session (*kisah teladan*), and hands-on religious practice. Teachers regularly use modeling, peer support, and one-on-one guidance. In cases involving students with multiple disabilities, teachers often collaborate with parents to ensure reinforcement of learning at home. A teacher shared during an interview on March 27, 2024:

"For students who struggle to memorize du'a, we provide home worksheets with simple images and words so their parents can assist at home."

The use of multisensory teaching media, including embossed Arabic letters for students with visual impairments and prayer movement dolls, was also recorded in the school's media inventory (Document Analysis, March 2024). These strategies reflect an inclusive pedagogical framework that prioritizes participation and engagement.

3.3. Implementation of Religious Habits for Character Formation

Daily routines at SLB Sinar Harapan 2 incorporate religious activities designed to internalize Islamic values and strengthen religious identity. Students perform congregational Dhuha and Dzuhur prayers, recite Asmaul Husna, and engage in mutual greetings at the start and end of the day. These rituals are conducted consistently from Monday to Friday. Teachers reported that such habits have contributed to students' character development, especially in areas of discipline, empathy, and cooperation. One teacher stated in an interview (March 2024):

"Previously, many students didn't interact much. Now after prayers, they shake hands with each other and assist friends who have difficulties."

Observation records on April 8, 2024, described how students took the initiative to organize the prayer area without prompts from teachers. Furthermore, school documentation of weekly evaluation forms indicated improved punctuality and increased participation in religious routines over the past semester.

3.4. Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of PAI Learning

Despite adaptive strategies and strong teacher commitment, several challenges were consistently identified during the data collection process: (1) Limited Instructional Time. PAI subjects are scheduled only once a week for 90 minutes, limiting opportunities for reinforcement and individualized follow-up. This issue was repeatedly highlighted in interviews with teachers and the principal; (2) Communication Barriers. Students with multiple or complex disabilities, such as combined intellectual and hearing impairments, present significant challenges in classroom communication. One teacher noted: "It takes several sessions for some students just to understand the concept of 'niat' (intention),

because they cannot fully grasp abstract concepts." (Interview, March 2024); (3) Resource Limitations. The school lacks adequate specialized media and tools for teaching PAI to students with diverse needs. Documentation of the school's 2023–2024 inventory lists only basic instructional tools, with no braille Qur'ans or adaptive salat kits available.

3.5. Perceived Impact of PAI Learning on Religious Character

The implementation of inclusive Islamic Religious Education has been associated with observable behavioral changes among students. Based on interviews and observation records, teachers and administrators noted improvements in students' religious habits, social interactions, and personal discipline. For instance, students were observed initiating prayer preparations without teacher prompting. Field notes dated April 10, 2024, document:

"A group of students initiated Dhuha prayer without teacher prompting, demonstrating increased independence."

Another example recorded on April 15, 2024, described a student with autism spectrum disorder reminding peers to perform ablution and patiently waiting in line. Parents interviewed during home visits corroborated these findings, reporting that children began practicing greetings, short prayers, and handwashing routines independently at home. These behaviors suggest that consistent religious practice at school contributes positively to moral and spiritual development.

3.6. Supplementary Findings

While not part of the primary objectives, several secondary findings emerged during data collection. These include increased parental engagement in PAI activities and requests for take-home materials. Teachers reported that during Ramadan, many parents requested guidance on how to involve their children in fasting and tarawih prayers at home. School documentation from March 2024 shows the development of a special Ramadan activity guide tailored for students with special needs.

Table 1. Summary of Primary Themes and Supporting Evidence

Theme	Data Source		Supporting Evidence
Adaptive Learning Methods	Observation, Documentation	Interview, Documentation	Use of visual cards, sign language videos, repetitive instruction
Teacher Strategies	Interview, Documentation	Documentation	Modeling, parental involvement, multisensory tools
Implementation Challenges	Interview, Observation		Limited time, communication barriers, lack of resources
Impact on Religious Character	Observation, Documentation	Interview, Documentation	Increased independence, spiritual habits, social empathy

The results of this study indicate that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SLB Sinar Harapan 2 Probolinggo is implemented through adaptive instructional methods, consistent religious routines, and inclusive pedagogical strategies. Despite several systemic and logistical challenges, the program has fostered notable developments in students' religious habits and interpersonal behaviors. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and school documentation provide a comprehensive picture of how inclusive Islamic education contributes to character formation among students with special needs. These findings serve as a foundation for further analysis in the subsequent discussion section.

4. Discussion

The present study was conducted to explore how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is implemented for students with special needs at SLB Sinar Harapan 2 Probolinggo, focusing on instructional methods, teacher strategies, implementation challenges, and

impacts on character development. The investigation responds to the broader discourse on inclusive education, which emphasizes equitable access and participation in religious learning for all students, including those with disabilities.²² Within inclusive Islamic education, the development of religious character through habitual practice remains underexplored, especially in the context of special schools. Previous studies have highlighted both the promise and complexity of implementing inclusive pedagogy in faith-based learning environments, particularly when accommodating students' cognitive, sensory, or behavioral challenges.²³ The findings of this study thus contribute valuable insights to a field in need of culturally and pedagogically grounded evidence.

This study found that teachers employed adaptive methods—such as visual, tactile, and multisensory learning tools—to align with students' specific disabilities. Structured routines involving daily religious practices, collaborative learning, and parent engagement emerged as key strategies for delivering PAI in an inclusive setting. Despite limited instructional time and resource constraints, teachers consistently reported observable improvements in student behavior, such as increased independence during prayer and stronger peer interactions. Notably, communication barriers with students experiencing multiple disabilities remained a critical challenge, often delaying conceptual comprehension. An unexpected secondary finding was the active involvement of parents, particularly during Ramadan, highlighting a school-home continuum in supporting religious character formation.

The results affirm previous claims that inclusive educational outcomes are deeply influenced by teacher efficacy, contextual strategies, and the presence of supportive environments. Studies such as Mintz²⁴ and Dignath et al.²⁵ emphasize that teacher training and adaptive teaching practices can enhance inclusive delivery across subjects, aligning with the observed use of differentiated instruction in this study. However, this study diverges from findings like Bessudnov et al., which suggest that institutional autonomy may impede inclusion;²⁶ in contrast, SLB Sinar Harapan 2, though limited in resources, demonstrated a strong institutional commitment to inclusive religious education. The incorporation of multisensory media and peer-based modeling also resonates with literature stressing the importance of embodied and participatory pedagogy for children with special needs.²⁷ Meanwhile, the parental engagement documented here echoes Qu's call for integrating social-contextual frameworks to advance inclusive practices.²⁸

²² Anna Shutaleva et al., "Sustainability of Inclusive Education in Schools and Higher Education: Teachers and Students with Special Educational Needs," *Sustainability* 15, no. 4 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043011>.

²³ David Armstrong, "Wicked Problems in Special and Inclusive Education," *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs* 17, no. 4 (October 1, 2017): 229–36, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12402>.

²⁴ Mintz, "A Comparative Study of the Impact of Enhanced Input on Inclusion at Pre-Service and Induction Phases on the Self-Efficacy of Beginning Teachers to Work Effectively with Children with Special Educational Needs."

²⁵ Dignath et al., "Teachers' Beliefs About Inclusive Education and Insights on What Contributes to Those Beliefs: A Meta-Analytical Study."

²⁶ Liu et al., "School Autonomy and Educational Inclusion of Children with Special Needs: Evidence from England."

²⁷ Tiina Kuutti et al., "Participation, Involvement and Peer Relationships in Children with Special Educational Needs in Early Childhood Education," *European Journal of Special Needs Education* 37, no. 4 (July 4, 2022): 587–602, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1920214>.

²⁸ Qu, "Structural Barriers to Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in China."

One possible explanation for the success of inclusive PAI implementation lies in the school's use of habitual religious routines that provide consistency, repetition, and spiritual reinforcement. These routines may create a stable structure for students who often rely on predictable environments to regulate behavior and acquire new skills. Additionally, the personalization of lesson objectives through Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) likely contributed to the observed behavioral and spiritual growth. However, the limited duration of PAI sessions—only 90 minutes per week—suggests that meaningful character development can occur even in time-constrained settings when instruction is highly focused and contextually relevant. This finding invites further examination of the mechanisms by which brief but targeted religious activities affect long-term behavioral change.

Furthermore, the emotional and spiritual dimensions of Islamic education may hold unique value for students with special needs, offering not just moral instruction but also social-emotional support. Prayer routines, for instance, facilitated not only discipline but also social empathy, as evidenced by student interactions before and after prayer. These behaviors suggest that faith-based education, when conducted inclusively, can foster a sense of belonging and shared identity among students with disabilities. Yet, one must interpret such improvements with caution, as behavioral change may not solely be attributable to PAI instruction but could be influenced by other schoolwide or familial interventions. Future research should consider longitudinal studies or mixed-method designs to triangulate such effects more robustly.

Another significant factor is the proactive role of parents, who extended religious learning into the home environment by supporting du'a memorization and ritual practice. This finding underscores the importance of family-school partnerships in sustaining inclusive character education. The production of take-home religious materials—such as prayer guides for students with autism or visual impairments—demonstrates that inclusive religious education does not end in the classroom. Rather, it forms a continuous loop of shared responsibility, reinforcing learning across domains of student life. The observed increase in parental requests during Ramadan also indicates a growing awareness of their children's capabilities and spiritual rights, which may empower families to advocate for more inclusive community religious activities.

The implications of this study are threefold. First, it confirms that inclusive religious education, when grounded in culturally relevant pedagogy and habitual practices, can contribute meaningfully to the development of student character. Second, it highlights the critical role of teacher creativity and adaptability in compensating for systemic limitations such as time and resource constraints. Finally, it points to the need for policy and institutional support to sustain inclusive religious practices beyond the classroom, particularly through family engagement and community collaboration. Policymakers and education stakeholders should consider integrating inclusive training into religious teacher preparation programs and increasing resource allocation for specialized instructional tools. Ultimately, inclusive Islamic education can serve as both a pedagogical and spiritual framework for cultivating moral agency among students with special needs, reaffirming their full participation in religious and social life.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) for students with special needs at SLB Sinar Harapan 2 Probolinggo, focusing on teaching methods, teacher strategies, challenges, and the impact on religious character development. The findings demonstrate that inclusive Islamic education, rooted in daily

religious routines and culturally relevant pedagogy, contributes meaningfully to the moral and spiritual formation of students with various disabilities. Teachers employed adaptive strategies using visual, tactile, and kinesthetic media, aligned with students' individual needs. Daily structured activities, such as congregational prayers and religious greetings, proved instrumental in internalizing Islamic values. Collaborative teaching and home-based reinforcement further supported students' consistent engagement in religious learning. Despite systemic limitations—such as restricted instructional time, communication difficulties with students having complex disabilities, and insufficient teaching tools—teachers reported significant progress in students' religious habits, social interactions, and personal independence. Parental involvement, especially during Ramadan, enhanced the continuity of learning and strengthened the school-home connection. These results affirm that habit-based religious practices, when tailored to diverse learning abilities, can effectively foster character development even in highly differentiated learning environments. The study has three key implications. First, it highlights the effectiveness of habitual religious routines in shaping spiritual identity among special needs learners. Second, it underlines the importance of teacher creativity and adaptability in ensuring inclusive access to religious education. Third, it points to the urgent need for institutional and policy-level support, including the provision of inclusive instructional tools and resources for families. These implications provide practical guidance for educators and policymakers striving to advance equitable and faith-integrated learning environments. However, this study is not without limitations. As it focuses on a single institution, its findings may not fully reflect broader educational contexts. The qualitative approach, while offering rich descriptions, limits the ability to generalize outcomes or quantify changes in character. Moreover, the absence of student perspectives may omit important experiential insights. Future research should expand to multiple schools, apply longitudinal and participatory approaches, and evaluate the effectiveness of specific inclusive tools and strategies. In sum, this research confirms that inclusive Islamic education—when designed with adaptive methods and sustained through consistent religious practice—can become a transformative pathway for nurturing religious character among students with special needs.

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