

Nurturing Independence: Parents as Game Changers for Children with Special Needs at Zamzam Kindergarten

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Abstract. Children with special needs often face various challenges in developing independence, such as maintaining personal hygiene, dressing themselves, and performing other daily activities. This study aims to examine the role of parents in supporting the development of independence in children with special needs at Zamzam Kindergarten. The method employed is qualitative, with data collection techniques including interviews, observations, and document studies, as well as triangulation to ensure the validity of the findings. The results of the study highlight the role of guidance, familiarization with simple activities, and motivation provided by parents in enhancing children's independence. However, time constraints and a lack of parental knowledge base remain the pivotal challenges. Collaboration between parents and the school, such as through parenting classes, has proven effective in supporting children's independence development. These findings emphasize that synergy between parents and the school is key to optimally fostering independence in children with special needs.

Keywords: *Independence, Children with special needs, Parents, Collaboration*

Abstrak. Anak-anak dengan kebutuhan khusus sering menghadapi berbagai tantangan dalam mengembangkan kemandirian, seperti menjaga kebersihan pribadi, berpakaian sendiri, dan melakukan aktivitas sehari-hari lainnya. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran orang tua dalam mendukung perkembangan kemandirian anak-anak dengan kebutuhan khusus di Taman Kanak-Kanak Zamzam. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif, dengan teknik pengumpulan data meliputi wawancara, observasi, dan studi dokumen, serta triangulasi untuk memastikan validitas temuan. Hasil penelitian menyoroti peran bimbingan, pengenalan terhadap aktivitas sederhana, dan motivasi yang diberikan oleh orang tua dalam meningkatkan kemandirian anak-anak. Namun, keterbatasan waktu dan kurangnya pengetahuan orang tua tetap menjadi tantangan utama. Kerjasama antara orang tua dan sekolah, seperti melalui kelas parenting, terbukti efektif dalam mendukung perkembangan kemandirian anak-anak. Temuan ini menekankan bahwa sinergi antara orang tua dan sekolah merupakan kunci untuk secara optimal mengembangkan kemandirian pada anak-anak dengan kebutuhan khusus.

Kata Kunci: *Kemandirian, Anak berkebutuhan khusus, Orang tua, Kolaborasi*

Introduction

Children with special needs, according to Mardiansah et al. (2024) are children who have limitations or unique characteristics in terms of physical, mental, social, or emotional aspects, which affect their growth and development compared to other children. Furthermore, according to Amanullah (2022) children with special needs are individuals who experience obstacles in their mental, physical, or intellectual development, so children with special needs require special attention to help them adapt to their surroundings. Furthermore, according to Nugroho et al., (2018) children with special needs are children who experience differences or discrepancies from the average condition of children in general, whether in physical, mental, intellectual, social, or emotional aspects. Therefore, it can be concluded that children with special needs are individuals with limitations or differences in physical, mental, intellectual, social, or emotional aspects who require special attention to support their development.

Children with special needs often face various challenges in their daily lives. The obstacles they face are highly varied and can affect their activities and quality of life (Haq et al., 2023; Prasetyo et al., 2025). One of the major obstacles faced by children with special needs is developing independence in their daily lives, including basic skills such as personal hygiene, dressing, eating, and performing other daily activities. This aspect of independence is certainly very important for increasing children's self-confidence, so that they can live independently in the future. However, children with special needs are different; they really need attention and concurrent assistance to carry out these activities. Therefore, the role of various parties, especially parents and educators, is very much needed to support their optimal development (Ardianingsih et al., 2021).

Parents are the primary educators who play a very fundamental role in the continuity of activities for children with special needs. Through consistent guidance and assistance, parents must be able to guide their children to learn basic life skills. This process is certainly not easy; parents must work extra hard and be consistent. Parents must also be able to set a positive example in strengthening their children's independent behaviour. Parents must give children the opportunity to try to perform these activities independently. Thus, parents are the main pillars in building the foundation of independence for children with special needs. This aligns with research conducted by Beno et al. (2022) which found that parental involvement can enhance

the independence of children with Down syndrome in activities such as playing, eating, bathing, dressing, and other daily tasks. Furthermore, this opinion aligns with the research by (Khoirunisa Az Zahra et al., 2024) which found that parental involvement in inclusive education, family communication, and interventions for children with special needs have high effectiveness in supporting children's independence and development. Furthermore, this is supported by research by Angela & Wiwin, (2024) which highlights the crucial role of parents in supporting the enhancement of children's independence, enabling them to accept their condition or circumstances and feel loved with genuine affection.

However, parents will inevitably face various challenges in fostering independence in children with special needs, one of which is the lack of understanding or skills among parents in guiding them. Therefore, systematic efforts are needed to enhance parents' capacity in supporting their children's development (Agustina, 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). According to research (Alimah, 2022; Pradnyaswari et al., 2022) psychoeducation can be used as an approach for parents to increase their knowledge, understanding, and practical skills in supporting the independence of children with special needs (Zhao et al., 2025). This program not only provides insight into the importance of independence for children with special needs but also provides concrete guidelines that can be applied in their daily lives. With psychoeducation, it is hoped that parents can be more active and directly involved in the process of developing the independence of children with special needs.

In addition, continuous habituation at home might also be a strategic step in shaping the independence of children with special needs (Peterman et al., 2019). Simple activities that could be done include dressing independently, tidying up their beds, bathing themselves, and eating and drinking on their own. These activities could certainly be effective means of training children to be independent. This process certainly requires patience, consistency, and positive reinforcement from parents so that children feel more confident and motivated to do it independently.

Furthermore, the role of parents also includes instilling discipline and responsibility in children. Consistently applying discipline will help children understand the importance of carrying out daily activities in an orderly and regular manner (Yasin, 2025). Meanwhile, responsibility instilled through simple tasks helps children learn to take on the role of caring for themselves. With proper guidance,

children with special needs can develop into more independent and confident individuals (Nuraina et al., 2023; Rohman, 2022; Yuzar et al., 2023).

In the process of developing independence in children with special needs, formal education can likewise be used as a means to assist in their learning process. Formal education will certainly provide an adaptive curriculum and learning methods that are specifically designed according to the individual needs of children with special needs. However, it should be noted that learning at school alone is not enough. Habits formed at home are the primary factor in fostering children's independence holistically. Collaboration between schools and parents is a crucial element in creating an environment that supports children's development and independence (Daulay et al., 2023; Ilham et al., 2024).

The issue of fostering independence in children with special needs has become a significant concern in early childhood education, particularly at Zamzam Kindergarten. Zamzam Kindergarten has designed a special program that involves parents in supporting the independence of children with special needs, such as parenting classes and individual counseling sessions aimed at providing parents with an understanding of their children's special needs.

Then, to support children's independence, the school likewise holds simple activities that involve daily skills, such as training children to dress themselves, eat by themselves, or tidy up their toys (Iqbal et al., 2023; Suwanto & Rahman, 2022). This program not only builds children's independence skills but also strengthens the emotional bond between parents and children in the learning process (Fadhli et al., 2024). With these various approaches, Zamzam Kindergarten hopes that parents can play a more active role in supporting the development of children with special needs. This is because children with special needs often require a special approach that involves the active role of parents to help them achieve independence according to their abilities. Therefore, this study is highly interested in examining in depth how parents support the development of independence in children with special needs through their parenting patterns, guidance, and collaboration with the school.

The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the role of parents in supporting the independence of children with special needs at Zamzam Kindergarten. This research aims to: (1) identify the parenting patterns applied by parents to enhance the independence of children with special needs, (2) explore the challenges faced by parents in the process of accompanying their children, and (3)

uncover the forms of collaboration between parents and the school in creating an environment that supports the development of children's independence. The results of this study are expected to provide useful insights for parents, teachers, and educational institutions to optimally support the developmental needs of children with special needs.

Method

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach with interviews, observations, and document studies. Interviews involved parents and teachers to explore their experiences, challenges, and strategies applied in the parenting process. Direct observation in the school environment also helped to obtain a realistic picture of the children's interactions and development. The data obtained will then be analyzed to identify the most effective parental roles in supporting the independence of children with special needs.

The research subjects are children with special needs enrolled at Zamzam Kindergarten, while the informants consist of parents, teachers, and the school principal. In-depth interviews were conducted with informants to explore the role of parents in parenting and efforts to support children's independence. The researcher also used participatory observation techniques to observe children's behavior in class, interactions with teachers, and parental involvement. Document studies were conducted by analyzing the programs implemented at Zamzam Kindergarten, child development reports, and records of communication between the school and parents.

This research took place at Zamzam Kindergarten, with an observation schedule adjusted to the school's activities. To ensure data validity, the researcher applied method triangulation, which involves comparing the results of interviews, observations, and document studies to find consistency in the information. With this procedure, the research is expected to produce valid findings and provide practical recommendations for parents, teachers, and school officials.

Results and Discussions

Results

The results of the study indicate that the role of parents in fostering independence in children with special needs is highly significant. In terms of providing guidance to children, parents routinely give directions and direct examples to children,

such as teaching them how to dress, eat and drink by themselves, and maintain hygiene. Parents also motivate children through praise and rewards, which certainly helps to build children's confidence in completing their independent tasks. However, there are still some parents who face obstacles in consistently providing guidance to their children, due to time constraints and a lack of technical knowledge. Furthermore, consistency in implementing a routine schedule to train children's independence is also still a challenge, especially due to external factors such as work or other family dynamics.

Children also show remarkable progress in their personal independence, such as dressing, eating, drinking, and maintaining personal hygiene, even though these activities are not yet carried out in a very complex manner. In addition, independence in simple activities has also increased, with children involved in tasks such as sweeping or tidying their beds showing increased responsibility and self-esteem for their achievements. In terms of decision-making, children began to show initiative, such as choosing clothes or determining playtime, although they still needed guidance in more complex decisions (Amanda & Aprinnisa, 2024).

Furthermore, the role of parents is also very significant in building the independence of children with special needs through simple activities that involve everyday skills. Parents who actively train their children to dress themselves, for example, not only help their children master basic skills, but also foster self-confidence and responsibility in their children. Similarly, when it comes to eating independently, parents provide support through patient and consistent guidance, allowing children to practice fine motor skills while learning to understand simple rules, such as the use of cutlery. Additionally, training children to tidy up their toys after use is an effective way to introduce concepts of orderliness and responsibility from an early age. From interviews conducted, parents revealed that the main challenges in this process are the time and patience required, but collaboration with teachers at school is highly beneficial in establishing such habits. Direct observation in the school environment also shows that children who receive intensive support from their parents tend to be more confident and independent in completing simple tasks. Thus, daily activities carried out at home, although simple, have a big impact on the development of independence in children with special needs at Zamzam Kindergarten.

Discussions

The research results show that the role of parents is very significant in building the independence of children with special needs. These findings are in line with research (Angela & Wiwin, 2024; Beno et al., 2022) which confirms that parental guidance, motivation, and consistency have a positive effect on the development of children's independence. This is also supported by research (Haq et al., 2023) that reveals the importance of integrating independence learning into daily routines, where simple activities carried out consistently can form positive habits in children. In addition, the use of psychoeducation techniques that involve parents as facilitators has also been proven to be effective in increasing children's independence and life skills. Therefore, psychoeducational-based training programs can be an effective solution to enhance parental capacity (Rumbewas et al., 2018; D. Sari, 2017)

Children with special needs face unique challenges in developing independence, particularly in performing daily activities such as personal hygiene, dressing, eating, and other routine tasks. In this context, the role of parents is a key factor in determining the extent to which children's independence can develop (D. R. Sari & Rasyidah, 2020; Syaputri & Afriza, 2022). Based on the results of research conducted at Zamzam Kindergarten, it was found that parents made a significant contribution through direct guidance, familiarization with simple activities, and consistent motivation. This approach helped children become familiar with routines, build self-confidence, and learn to complete daily tasks independently.

However, this process does not run smoothly. Many parents admit that time constraints due to busy work schedules and a lack of knowledge about their children's specific needs are the main obstacles to optimally supporting their children's development of independence. Therefore, the role of schools in supporting parents is very important. At Zamzam Kindergarten, the implementation of the parenting class program has proven effective in addressing these needs. Through this program, parents receive education, parenting strategies, and emotional support that strengthen their role at home. The collaboration between parents and the school has proven effective in enhancing the independence of children with special needs.

These findings show that an integrated approach between families and educational institutions is needed in the process of developing the independence of children with special needs. This joint effort not only supports the growth of children as individuals, but also strengthens their readiness to face social challenges in the

future. Therefore, building communication, understanding, and close cooperation between parents and schools must be a priority in the inclusive education system.

Overall, the findings of this study also reinforce the assumption that close collaboration between parents and schools is a key element in building the independence of children with special needs. Consistent and targeted support from both parties enables the creation of an environment conducive to child development, both at home and at school. Through active parental involvement in daily caregiving activities, as well as collaboration with teachers in designing and implementing individualized education programs, children with special needs can be trained to be independent and master life skills.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes that the role of parents is crucial in supporting the independence of children with special needs at Zamzam Kindergarten. Parents who actively provide guidance, motivation, and consistency in parenting can help children master basic life skills such as dressing, eating independently, maintaining hygiene, and tidying up toys. Through simple but consistent daily activities, children not only learn motor skills but also understand the concepts of responsibility, orderliness, and self-confidence. Close collaboration between parents and the school is one of the key factors in creating an environment that supports children's optimal development, particularly through programs such as parenting classes, workshops, and individual counseling sessions designed specifically to involve parents in the educational process.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the independence of children with special needs can be enhanced through the synergy between habits cultivated at home and adaptive educational programs at school. Emotional, technical, and educational support from parents, supported by teachers and the school, has a significant impact on children's development. By implementing appropriate parenting strategies and utilizing psychoeducational programs, it is hoped that children with special needs can develop into more independent and confident individuals, enabling them to adapt better to their social environment in the future.

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