



Inclusive Education Strategies for Achieving Learning Outcomes for Bajo Children at PKBM Ula-Ula Nusantara

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Abstract: Inclusive education provides opportunities for every student, including Bajo children, to receive educational services tailored to their needs and potential. This study aims to describe the inclusive education strategy at the Ula-Ula Sama Nusantara Community Learning Center (PKBM) and identify supporting and inhibiting factors for its implementation. The method used was a qualitative approach using interviews, observation, and documentation techniques, involving the PKBM head, the deputy head of curriculum, tutors, students, and parents. The results showed that the inclusive education strategy includes flexible curriculum adjustments, life skills-based learning, and strengthening character and social skills. Supporting factors include a flexible curriculum and tutor commitment, while inhibiting factors include limited facilities, tutor competence, and suboptimal parental support. In conclusion, the strategy creates an adaptive and participatory learning environment, supporting the non-academic learning outcomes of Bajo children.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Bajo Tribe, Life Skills, Non-formal Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a fundamental pillar in realizing equity and equitable educational accessibility for all children without discrimination. This paradigm mandates that every child has an equal right to receive a quality education, regardless of their diverse cultural, social, economic, or physical backgrounds (Ainscow, 2020). In Indonesia, the commitment to inclusive education has been legitimized through Minister of National Education Regulation (Permendiknas) No. 70 of 2009. This policy was designed to structure a diversity-friendly school system. However, in both theoretical and practical settings, the implementation of this policy remains diminished due to a strong bias toward addressing children with special needs (ABK) or groups with disabilities.

The essence of inclusivity, in its broader sense, which should encompass the rights of children from indigenous minority groups and maritime communities, remains marginalized in policy and receives insufficient attention. The primary issue underlying this research is the failure of the land-based formal education system, which tends to be homogenous, to adapt to the unique characteristics of Bajo children who have a maritime lifestyle. The Bajo people are one of the largest maritime indigenous communities in Indonesia, with an estimated population of 500,000 (BPS, 2020). Their widespread distribution across the coastal areas of Sulawesi, Maluku, and East Nusa Tenggara has given them distinctive socio-cultural characteristics: a nomadic lifestyle, a strong local language, and a strong attachment to the marine ecosystem (Satria, 2015).

The origins of the Bajo people remain a matter of debate among researchers. Some experts claim they originated in Sulawesi, while others believe they originated in the Philippines. Research by Bahri (2018) indicates that the Bajo people have close historical ties to sailors from the Philippines who

migrated to Indonesia. This is reinforced by similarities in language and culture between the Bajo and several other Philippine tribes. Historically, the Bajo have interacted with various other tribes, such as the Bugis and Makassarese, which have contributed to shaping their identity and culture. For example, in wedding traditions, the Bajo often adopt elements of Bugis culture, such as the use of certain attire and rituals (Yusran, 2020).

The impact of this misalignment between the formal school system and lifestyle is significant. According to field data, Bajo children experience initial linguistic barriers because they are far more fluent in the local Bajo language than in Indonesian, the official language of instruction in the classroom (Hasan & Suryawan, 2021). This situation is exacerbated by teachers' limited understanding of maritime culture and the use of rigid, conventional teaching methods. As a result, Bajo children's motivation to learn has plummeted, active participation in class is low, and their academic and non-academic achievements lag far behind those of the majority group.

This issue is crucial to examine now. If this neglect continues, Bajo children will experience double marginalization: cultural and geographical isolation, and structural depreciation in national learning outcomes. Current Literature Review (State of the Art) Theoretically, inclusive education requires curriculum flexibility to accommodate students' cultural identities (Ainscow, 2020). Historically and anthropologically, the Bajo have been identified as having close historical ties to migrant sailors from the Philippines, as evidenced by similarities in linguistic structure and maritime rituals (Bahri, 2018). Throughout their migration and settlement in Indonesian regions such as Buton, Muna, Wakatobi, and Bombana, the Bajo cultural entity has been dynamic and has experienced assimilation with land-based tribes such as the Bugis and Makassar, particularly in the dimension of wedding customs (Yusran, 2020).

However, existing educational literature has not been able to respond to this cultural dynamism. Research on indigenous community education has so far focused too much on aspects of cultural preservation or social integration at a macro level, without addressing pedagogical interventions in the classroom (Rohman, 2019). Research on inclusive education in Indonesia is also still trapped within the scope of special schools or disability inclusion (Suharto, 2020). No studies have specifically integrated maritime local wisdom into inclusive learning strategies to stimulate the non-academic potential of maritime students. On the other hand, the presence of non-formal education models such as Community Learning Centers (PKBM) in coastal areas is actually potential, but is still plagued by limited human resources and teachers who are less competent in interpreting the specific needs of fishermen's children. Research by UNESCO (2020) shows that students who study in an inclusive environment show an increase in academic ability of up to 25% compared to students in traditional educational settings. Furthermore, data from research conducted by Hasanuddin University (2021) indicates that Bajo children who study in an inclusive environment show a 35% increase in learning motivation compared to those who do not.

Based on the literature review above, a contextual and empirical gap (research gap) was identified. There is no systematic inclusive education strategy formula that bridges the conflict between the maritime culture of the Bajo Tribe and the academic demands of the land-based formal education system. Previous research has only positioned Bajo culture as a static sociological object of study, rather than as an input instrument in developing adaptive, contextual, and inclusive learning strategies. There is a research gap on how to transform language limitations and a nomadic lifestyle into stimuli that actually boost learning outcomes, particularly non-academic learning outcomes aligned with their ecological intelligence. The Scientific Novelty and Research Objectives of this study lie in the reconstruction of an inclusive education model that is no longer based on physical deficits (disability) but rather on maritime-cultural inclusion.

This research positions the distinctive characteristics of the Bajo Tribe (local language, maritime spatial orientation, and maritime wisdom) not as obstacles but as enriching assets in developing child-friendly contextual learning strategies. In general, this study aims to formulate an effective inclusive education strategy to optimize the potential of Bajo children amidst structural and cultural limitations. Specifically and operationally, this study aims to: (1) Analyze the effectiveness of inclusive education strategies on the achievement of non-academic learning outcomes of Bajo children. (2) Identify and map supporting factors (both internal and external) in the implementation of inclusive education strategies in the Bajo Tribe. (3) Identify and map structural and cultural inhibiting factors that hinder the implementation of inclusive education in Bajo children.

METHOD

This research uses a case study method with a qualitative approach. Researchers who focus on quantitative studies may lack the specialized skills and abilities required for qualitative research (Riyanto & Oktariyanda, 2023). The research location was the Ula-Ula Sama Nusantara Community Learning Center (PKBM) in Terapung Village, Mawasangka District, Central Buton Regency, Southeast Sulawesi Province, which is inhabited by the Bajo tribe. This PKBM was chosen because it has a significant student population from the Bajo tribe and has implemented several forms of inclusive education strategies. The research subjects consisted of 20 Bajo children, 10 teachers, and 5 community leaders.

This subject selection was carried out purposively, considering their experience and involvement in the education of Bajo children. Data collection techniques in this study were carried out through three methods: (1) participant observation (2) in-depth interviews (3) documentation. In addition, the research uses data analysis according to Miles and Huberman and Saldana (2014), the steps required for qualitative data analysis are: (1) summarizing data, (2) displaying data, and (3) verifying data and drawing conclusions. Qualitative data analysis based on the work of Miles and Huberman and Saldana can be seen in the following image:

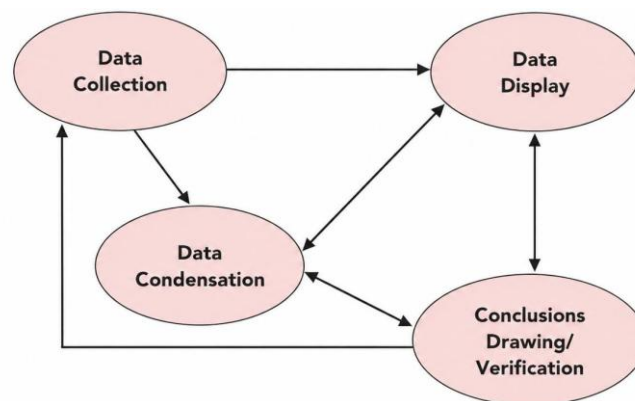


Figure 1. interactive analysis model

In addition, to test the validity of the research data, standards or criteria are also used that can be used to guarantee the reliability or truth of the research results, namely credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability tests are carried out in line with those described by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of an inclusive education strategy at the Ula-Ula Sama Nusantara Community Learning Center (PKBM) provides a comprehensive overview of efforts to fulfill the right to education for Bajo children through non-formal channels. Unlike previous research, which has largely focused on formal schools and the academic achievement of children with special needs, the findings at this institution show a different outcome. The success of inclusive education in coastal areas is determined by the institution's flexibility in adapting programs to the social and economic conditions of the local community. This adjustment demonstrates that non-academic learning outcomes, such as character building, independence, and life skills, are far more relevant to overcoming the geographical and cultural barriers experienced by the Bajo community. In accordance with the research focus, an in-depth analysis of field findings, scientific interpretations, and comparisons with previous literature are outlined in three main points:

(1) Inclusive Education Strategy for Non-Academic Learning Outcomes of the Bajo

This study found that the implementation of inclusive education strategies at the Ula-Ula Sama Nusantara Community Learning Center (PKBM) began systematically with the development of a curriculum tailored to the actual needs of the students. Through a comprehensive initial assessment,

program administrators were able to map the interests, talents, basic abilities, and psychological backgrounds of Bajo children, especially those who had dropped out of school.

This data was then transformed into a learning guide that no longer required uniform mastery of academic material for all children. Instead, the curriculum was designed to provide ample space for the development of non-academic skills, such as independence, social skills, and the restoration of self-confidence. Scientifically, this step is crucial given that Bajo children live in a dynamic coastal community and face unique economic challenges. The implementation of rigid conventional learning models has been shown to often trigger rejection, trauma, or re-learning failure in children from vulnerable groups. This focus on curriculum adjustment is theoretically aligned with the principles of differentiated learning by Tomlinson (2014) and the concept of easy access to learning by Ainscow (2005). However, the novelty of this research is the evidence that a flexible curriculum can be effectively implemented in non-formal educational institutions to engage children from remote indigenous communities. While previous research has focused primarily on flexible curricula for children with special needs in formal schools, this finding provides new insights that the same approach is highly appropriate for addressing social isolation and locational barriers in coastal communities. This approach ensures the learning process remains meaningful without alienating children from their culture and daily lives.

(2) Supporting Factors for the Implementation of Inclusive Education Strategies in the Bajo Tribe

The successful implementation of inclusive education strategies in the field is strongly supported by strong collaboration between internal and external parties within the institution. Internally, the primary support comes from the tutors' commitment to implementing learning tailored to each child's individual abilities. This practice is evident in the way tutors divide their learning time: children requiring basic assistance receive more intensive guidance, while those who are already capable are immediately directed to complete practical assignments independently. Furthermore, the existence of a life skills program tailored to the coastal natural resources is a key driver of improving children's non-academic abilities.



Figure 2. Strengthening Character Through Religious Learning

In addition, learning for Bajo children is aligned with the results of the child assessment that was carried out before the learning was implemented, the following is the flow:

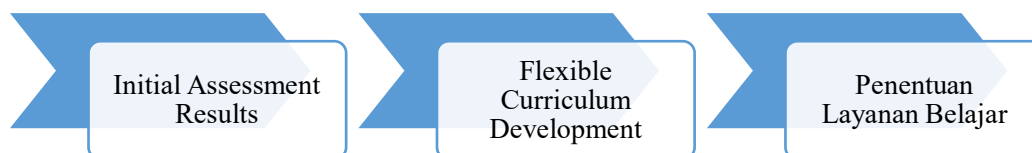


Figure 3. PKBM service adjustment flow

The Flow of Learning Service Adjustments at the Ula-Ula Sama Nusantara Community Learning Center (PKBM) The collaboration between these parties has succeeded in creating a learning environment that is not only academically appropriate but also provides a sense of psychological security for the Bajo children.

When learning programs are designed to align with daily activities and village potential, education becomes more realistic and easily accepted by the mindset of coastal communities. This ultimately fosters a sense of responsibility, adaptability, and independence in children. This internal support is strengthened by a change in perspective from external parties, namely the growing awareness of parents to allow and support their children to participate in practical activities at the PKBM.



Figure 4. Learning Activities Outside the Classroom

Life Skills Activities Based on the Local Potential of Coastal Communities: These social conditions align with [Maslow's \(2022\)](#) humanistic perspective on the importance of ensuring a sense of security and environmental acceptance before an individual can develop to their full potential. These findings also support [Gardner's \(1983\)](#) theory of multiple intelligences, which recognizes that humans possess diverse intellectual potential beyond language and mathematics. What distinguishes this research from previous publications is the uncovered patterns of support within coastal communities formed through a familial, cultural approach. The relationships established are not bureaucratic, like those of a typical school committee, but rather a form of trust built by tutors through direct conversations within residential areas. This trust has proven to be the most effective way to allay indigenous communities' doubts about the existence of educational institutions.

(3) Inhibiting factors in the implementation of inclusive education for Bajo children

Although learning strategies have been carefully designed and implemented, this study also identified several obstacles that limit the success of inclusive education at the Ula-Ula Sama Nusantara Community Learning Center (PKBM). The main obstacle in terms of facilities is the insufficient quantity and quality of life skills practice equipment. This shortage forces learners to share equipment, which directly reduces practice time and limits the children's learning experiences. Furthermore, in terms of teaching staff, tutors face challenges due to a lack of formal training in inclusive education. Due to the lack of government training programs, tutors are forced to find their own teaching methods, relying solely on their experience with Bajo children.



Figure 5. Inclusive Learning Through Practical Activities

Scientifically, these obstacles demonstrate that there is still a significant gap between the ideals of inclusive education regulations at the national level and the readiness of facilities in the regions. External obstacles, such as the economic conditions of fishing families who still view children as labor to help

earn a living, are the main cause of children's frequent absence from school. The absence of Bajo children cannot be directly interpreted as a form of rejection of education, but rather a survival strategy that adapts to the fishing season and pressing economic needs. This situation confirms Ainscow's (2005) opinion that inadequate physical environments and supporting facilities will reduce the quality of inclusive education itself. The novelty of these obstacles indicates the phenomenon of double vulnerability in non-formal educational institutions in coastal areas. On the one hand, PKBM must struggle independently to overcome limited funds and facilities due to a lack of government policy support. On the other hand, these institutions must contend with local customs that do not yet place formal education as a primary need in their lives.

CONCLUSION

Based on research on the non-academic learning outcomes of the Bajo tribe, the inclusive education strategy at the Ula-Ula Sama Nusantara Community Learning Center (PKBM) has proven effective in advancing knowledge by improving the non-academic learning outcomes of Bajo children. Through life skills-based programs, hands-on practice, and out-of-class learning, students successfully develop independence, self-confidence, responsibility, discipline, social skills, adaptability, and religious values meaningful to their daily lives. Supporting factors for the successful implementation of cultural inclusion include the synergistic support of a flexible, student-centered curriculum, the strong commitment of tutors to providing adaptive services, and the availability of an accommodating learning environment. Emotional and structural support from parents and the surrounding community also strengthen the effectiveness of non-formal education in coastal areas. Furthermore, inhibiting factors and recommendations for future experiments highlight the challenges faced by the application of this strategy, including limited infrastructure, funding, non-formal policies, and the need to improve tutor competency and awareness among some parents. As a scientific extension, future experiments are suggested to focus on the development of maritime-based adaptive digital learning modules and specific inclusive competency training for indigenous community teachers.

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