

## The role of counselors in shaping students' self-happiness in inclusive schools

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**Abstract:** This study aims to look at the role of counselors in shaping students' self-happiness in inclusive schools at Muhammadiyah Curup junior high school. Self-happiness is an important thing that must exist in inclusive group rooms; therefore, counselors need to understand the characteristics of students to unite normal children and children with special needs with the same curriculum and learning process. In inclusive schools, it is found that bullying of children with special needs still occurs, and the learning process in inclusive groups is relatively slow and constrained, making ordinary students bored and upset. The approach used is qualitative with a grounded theory design. The data will be interpreted in a naturalistic way to overcome the problems in this study. Data interpretation and a naturalistic approach will provide answers related to the counselor's role in developing students' self-happiness in the inclusion group of Muhammadiyah Curup junior high school. The research subjects were counselors, subject teachers, principals, normal children, children with special needs, and parents of children with special needs. Data collection was done voluntarily by building good interactions without coercion and carefully selecting informants. Data were analyzed using three levels of analysis: open coding (forming categories of information about the event or phenomenon under study), axial coding (solving for core themes during qualitative data analysis), and selective coding (selective coding to find significant categories). The results revealed that the role of counselors is to build collective consciousness with the quality and quantity of empathy, positive relationships, emotional attachment and connection, and meaningfulness of life for oneself and others.

**Keywords:** Counsellor; inclusive school; self-happiness

### Introduction

Students aged 15 to 18 years are turbulent adolescents due to the transition from childhood to adulthood (Karneli et al., 2018). This period occurs biologically, cognitively, and socio-emotionally (Ardi et al., 2012), as well as physical and psychological changes, seeking self-identity and building new relationships with others (Sari et al., 2017). More clearly, the adolescent phase is a crucial segment of individual development. It begins with the maturation of physical (sexual) organs so they can reproduce (Sihotang et al., 2016). During this period, adolescents will experience various feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and confusion, as well as raging hopes, challenges, pleasures, and tribulations (Sihotang et al., 2016). For adolescents to perform good growth and development, good psychological conditions or practical daily life (KES) are needed, one form of which is self-happiness.

According to Bakker & Oerlemans (2011) happiness and subjective well-being refer to positive feelings, namely as a role for happiness or calmness, as well as other positive states such as participating in activities that flow or are dissolved in them. So self-happiness is characterized by feeling calm and serenity without being forced into a person (Sharma, 2012). Furthermore (Elizabeth B. Hurlock, 1991), this feeling arises because of fulfilling one's hopes and needs. Furthermore, happiness is the ultimate goal of a person's life (Frijters et al., 2020) because happiness as life satisfaction is a pleasant overall quality of life and positive effects dominate over adverse effects. While Veenhoven (Sandel, 2022) happiness makes a person comfortable and happy, smiles, laughs and creates cheerfulness. To get happiness, including participating, dissolving, and flowing in positive activities (Chaer, 2017), happiness and subjective well-being indicate positive feelings, namely as a role for happiness or calmness and other favorable conditions such as participating in activities that flow or are dissolved in it. So happiness is essential and must be achieved by learning to understand the true meaning of happiness; even the purpose of learning is also to achieve happiness.

As Allah says in the Qur'an letter Al Baqarah, 201:

وَمَنْهُمْ مَّنْ يُقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Al-Baqarah verse 201 explains to humans to achieve true happiness in this world and the hereafter by constantly asking for forgiveness and goodness to be free from the torment of hellfire. In line with that (Helliwell et al., 2021), happiness is essential, and one focuses on achieving it throughout life. Self-happiness can be achieved by doing some essential things such as Positive emotion, Engagement, Positive relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. It is necessary to develop religion, reason, and intellect (Hamka, 2015). Religious commitment and happiness are mutually influential (Abdel-Khalek, 2010), in line with the relationship between happiness and Islam (Joshano, 2013). Religion plays an essential role in shaping happiness using Zuhud, Ikhlas, Qana'ah, and Tawakal (Arrasyid, 2019). Individuals will be happy if they have a positive mood (Anugrah et al., 2019); with happiness, humans can know themselves, God, the world, and the afterlife (Sofia & Sari, 2018). In the end, self-happiness is the primary concern as long as it is within the scope of goodness (Manago, 2022).

Self-happiness is needed in learning; learners have positive emotions, feel meaningful, have positive social relationships, and feel successful or accomplished. Five factors in the school environment can bring out learners' feelings of happiness, including good treatment by teachers, good relationships with peers, smooth learning activities, and material possessions (money, clothes, learning equipment). The more often learners experience favorable circumstances at school, the more it will cause learners to experience feelings of happiness. There is a significant positive relationship between each aspect of the source of happiness (Anas & Umar, 2021).

Self-happiness in inclusive schools is very important to achieve learning goals because self-happiness allows normal children and children with special needs to develop more optimally and independently in completing their developmental tasks with more confidence (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006). Inclusive schools must maintain a balance (equilibrium) with other systems because inclusive education teachers must recognize the characteristics of children's specialties and nurture them according to their specialties (Digest, 2003); it is expected that children with special needs can develop according to their potential.

Research results still show verbal, physical, and mental/psychological bullying behavior. Motivation is to feel happy with the perpetrator by seeking the attention of teachers and friends, avoiding the learning process, and wanting money (Damayanto et al., 2020). As for the verbal form, it looks like mocking, laughing at, deceiving friends, labeling, and also discriminating. Even this verbal abuse has an unfavorable impact, including anger, hurt, and emotion (Fitrah et al., 2022). Bullying behavior brings anxiety to parents of children with special needs; good handling can reduce this behavior (Sakinah & Marlina, 2018). Proper handling makes people feel comfortable and calm if the school becomes conducive and can create happiness in children with special needs.

There is a significant relationship in the negative direction between regular students' empathy and the school climate with bullying behavior toward students with special needs (Mandasari, 2020). Society's acceptance of people with disabilities can further empower them to achieve happiness. Social support and environmental acceptance are crucial for people with disabilities; they need psychological and physical support for their happiness. Life skills and physical counseling through outbound training are expected to provide a new atmosphere that encourages people with disabilities to achieve happiness (Mumpuni & Zainudin, 2020). Then about the role of positive emotions in special mentor teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic, the results show that positive emotions have a role in fostering a sense of patience and spirituality in special mentor teachers (Diponegoro, 2020). Several studies show something different from the title, namely, how to develop self-happiness in inclusive school counselors.

Muhammadiyah Curup Junior High School as an implementer of inclusive education has seven children with special needs out of 43 students, or equivalent to 16.3%. Most children with special needs come from Schools for disabled children, which are close to Muhammadiyah Curup junior high school. Problems that occur with children with special needs include

1. Experiencing bullying from regular students,
2. The teaching and learning process has slowed down since the presence of children with special needs,
3. Lack of empathy and cooperation between regular students and children with special needs, and
4. Facilities and accessibility for children with special needs make them feel uncomfortable.

## Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a grounded theory design. The interpretative aspect and naturalistic approach played a role in addressing the problem under study. The research subjects are trusted informants who master the information and providers the data needed. In contrast, the informants in this study are counselors, subject teachers, principals, regular students, children with special needs, and parents of children with special needs. Data collection through interviews, observation, and documentation is carried out voluntarily by building natural interactions and without coercion, and the selection of informants is carried out carefully. Data were analyzed using three levels of analysis: open coding (forming categories of information about the event or phenomenon under study), axial coding (solving for core themes during qualitative data analysis), and selective coding (selective coding to find significant categories).

## Results and Discussion

Muhammadiyah Curup Junior High School has implemented inclusive education with the following student data identity:

**Table 1. Student data of junior high school Muhammadiyah Curup**

No	Group	Total	Regular students		Total	Children with special needs		
			Gender			Gender		
			Male	Female		Male	Female	Total
1	VII	9	4	3	7	2	-	2
2	VIII	17	8	8	16	1	-	1
3	IX	17	7	6	13	2	2	4
	Total	43	19	17	36	5	2	7

Source: June 2022 report

From the table above, it can be seen that the total number of students is 43, consisting of 36 regular students and seven children with special needs, meaning that 16.3% of students have special needs. Even group IX has four people, even though the maximum rule for children with special needs is three people per group. Judging from the ratio of students, 43 people, 24 are male, and 19 are female; out of 7 students with special needs, five are male, and two are female.

The number of children with special needs at Muhammadiyah Curup junior high school is seven people, with the following details:

**Table 2. Data on children with special needs at junior high school Muhammadiyah Curup**

Initial	Type of Physical Disability	Group	Gender		
			Male	Female	Total
DOR	Mentally disabled	VII	1	-	1
MSA	Autistic	VIII	1	-	1
ADS	Mentally disabled	VIII	1	-	1
DRP	Mentally disabled; Disabled	IX	1	-	1
MSD	Speech impaired	IX	1	-	1
IJ	Disabled	IX	-	1	1
ST	Speech impaired; Disabled	IX	-	1	1
<b>Total</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

Source: June 2022 report

The table above shows that there are seven children with special needs. Children with special needs in the research location consisted of five boys and two girls with limitations of being mentally disabled, autistic, disabled, and speech impaired. These special needs children are scattered in group VII, as many as two people; group VIII, as many as one person; and group IX, as many as four. Among the seven children with special needs, three children had mental impairments; one child was autistic, two had disabled, and one had a speech impairment. Even two children had two disabilities; one child had a mental and disabled, and one child had a speech and hearing impairment.

Factors that are a source of happiness for learners can be arranged based on the magnitude of the coefficient of determination, namely:

**Table 3. Factors of self-happiness**

Source of activity	Positive emotion	Accomplishment	Engagement	Positive relationship	Meaning
Peer relationships	√	√	√	√	√
Teacher's treatment in group	√	√	√	√	√
Study activities	√	√	√	√	√
Teacher's treatment outside the group	√	√	√	√	√
Material ownership	√	√	√	√	√

## Discuss

### Social relationships with peers

Positive emotions are seen in children with special needs who are physically disabled because cognition and emotions are not problematic and communication with their friends is smooth. Cultivating positive emotions in children with special needs can be difficult. Children with special needs have difficulty focusing their attention, and if reprimanded, they will swear. Special needs children are very emotional and reactive, and sometimes their regular friends get scared. Those who reduce the emotions of children with special needs and direct them positively are counselors and senior teachers who have been in charge for a long time because inclusive education in this school has existed since 2013, whose students are from Schools for disabled children adjacent to this school. Psychologically, the tensions between children with special needs and regular students can be seen during break times, when they go to the canteen and play in the field while laughing and joking with each other. The treatment is different when children with disabilities come to join in, while other children with special needs are invited to join in. Children with special needs, Mentally-disabled, and mild autism are more-passive and

happy to be invited rather than initiated to join. Children with special needs are more subjective and sensitive in building relationships. However, suppose there is an art performance. In that case, children with special needs are more enthusiastic and also participate in dancing with their friends, in line with the research results that creative dance can improve the motor skills of children with special needs with Mentally disabled (Reinders et al., 2019). For this reason, regular students must develop an attitude of tolerance and love and accept children with special needs as they are (Crispel & Kasperski, 2021).

Attachment and the limitations of children with special needs make them dependent on others; the higher the level of disability, the higher the dependence on others. For children with special needs with high dependence on others, independence is directed so that they can take care of themselves, usually for children with a relatively low IQ. In the learning process at this school, children with special needs, mentally disabled, and autistic are not much required to meet curriculum targets, unlike children with special needs who are blind and disabled. However, the school has limitations, such as braille books for children with visual impairments and special assistant teachers who graduated from special education.

In the learning process, it was found that regular students were ignorant, reluctant to interact, and made fun of children with special needs. As of May 30, 2018, bullying cases in education amounted to 161 cases, while victims of violence and bullying were 36 cases or around 22.4%. Acts of bullying and bullying in education rank fourth in cases of child abuse in Indonesia, meaning that eight out of 10 children experience bullying (Triantoro, 2014). The level of egocentrism and acceptance of regular students is low (Lahav & Wolfson, 2022). Children with special needs are often found alone; regular students show reluctance to get along because of communication difficulties. The low quality of relationships between regular students and children with special needs in inclusive groups is reflected in high conflict, dependence, and low closeness (Lestari & Herawati, 2018).

They face new conditions in the meaningfulness and success of children with special needs in fostering social relationships. If favorable conditions are favorable, they will be happy, while adverse conditions make them disappointed and sad; children with special needs struggle to manage emotions. The counselor is responsible for maintaining the school's conduciveness. All stakeholders can achieve self-happiness in the inclusive school environment if they realize the importance of maintaining school conduciveness. Feelings of belonging, acceptance, cooperation, and empathy will foster self-happiness. Through group guidance, counselors try to foster the confidence of children with special needs, holding role models for children. Children with visual impairments and disabilities can understand what the counselor says. However, in contrast to children with mentally disabled and autism, it is challenging to understand what the counselor says due to IQ limitations and concentration difficulties. The success and happiness of children with special needs are when their group accepts them in totality without conditions. The phenomenon is that regular students need to treat children with special needs better (Safitri & Jusra, 2021).

### **Teacher treatment in the group**

Positive emotions are needed in learning; children with special needs become happy when classroom activities feel alive, familiar, friendly, and full of empathy. The counselor will create a conducive atmosphere by making student seating arrangements; this will create an attachment to the learning process in the group (Ajayi, 2022; El Mrabet & Ait Moussa, 2021).

Positive relationships can be seen in the peer mentoring program as tutors, where visually impaired children utilize their abilities in the choir in art lessons. In inclusive schools, principals recruit more teachers for Indonesian language, religion, and civic education (Yuhanis et al., 2020). In exact subjects, children with special needs are not required to do the

same thing as regular students due to significant differences in cognitive or conative abilities. Regular students are directed to participate in helping their colleagues with special needs.

Collective meaningfulness is seen in regular students who help children with special needs understand learning materials. For regular students, helping children with special needs is a field of good deeds, while for children with special needs, their lives are more meaningful by understanding knowledge. The phenomenon in the field is that regular students feel disturbed by the behavior of children with special needs who are less able to control their behavior, such as repeatedly going in and out of class and talking to themselves, causing the learning process in the classroom to be hampered.

The measure of success in group learning is if children with special needs can follow and understand what has been learned. Mentally disabled children are often found to have excessive tantrums when they get the treatment they do not want. The role of counselors in inclusive schools is to modify behavior, provide repeated instructions and provide choices according to student interests.

### **Learning activities**

Cognitive and affective differences affect student absorption; the same curriculum is intended for two types of students (regular and special needs). Problems often occur because the subject matter intended for regular students also requires upgrading the potential and emotions of children with special needs. Special instruments are needed to reveal, understand, analyze and interpret children with special needs. Regular students will achieve self-happiness if they can apply patience and sincerity in helping children with special needs.

In the learning process, children with special needs are bound to be present and involved physically and psychologically. The involvement of children with special needs is sometimes incomplete because there are little things they can do. Teachers must create a learning atmosphere that is alive and developing, not rigid and monotonous.

Teachers often experience obstacles to achieving curriculum targets due to situations and conditions beyond their abilities. At the end of the class session, teachers still provide additional guidance for children with special needs. There is a difference in the self-satisfaction of children with special needs when they get personal guidance outside classical guidance. Counselors also play their role in increasing motivation related to achieving a happy life for children with special needs; they will be allowed to get positive content that can increase the meaningfulness of their lives. In addition, to realize self-happiness, schools need to create unique programs that foster caring, empathy, cooperation, and mutual assistance between regular students and children with special needs (Sugihartatik, 2018).

Children with special needs show a happier face when learning in groups; they can interact and build intimate interpersonal relationships with their peers. They realize the importance of learning, and the government's encouragement to provide opportunities for them to work as civil servants motivates them to excel. These hopes and efforts are incomplete without cooperation from parents of children with special needs. To achieve common targets, parents must be consistent in parenting, building, and maintaining communication with teachers, doctors, and therapists (Heward, 2003). It requires seriousness from various parties to realize goals, such as the media, schools, communities, governments, and families (Jesslin & Kurniawati, 2020).

Children with special needs become proud if they score above the minimum completion criteria, even though the quality of the questions is more accessible and the number of questions is less than those intended for regular students. Parents are very much expected to guide children to study at home; the counselor gathers parents of children with special needs periodically and asks for their seriousness in guiding the learning of children with special needs.

### **Teacher treatment outside the group**

Counselors have a routine schedule to conduct home visits to children with special needs, which aims to strengthen and alleviate student problems. This home visit is carried out if the individual's problem is related to living conditions and relationships in the family. The supporting activities carried out are the aftermath of observations by the counselor. Most homes visited by counselors are children who lack attention from their guardians, such as children coming to school with broken pants and zippers, urinating carelessly, and using mixed shoes. Children with special needs who can take care of themselves are considered successful.

The desire of children with special needs to join the group is extreme, but when they try to enter, they are disappointed because they do not get the acceptance they expect. All parties have the same role and task to improve the self-happiness of children with special needs; this is not the task of counselors or only teachers. Regular students need to get direction and guidance from counselors to be directed to accept the existence of their colleagues with special needs by providing warm and kind treatment. Counselors must identify support sources for inclusive education and develop measurement instruments, evaluation processes, and follow-up programs (Nugroho, 2020).

High social support will increase the self-confidence of children with special needs and vice versa (Omnihara et al., 2019). A good relationship between regular students and children with special needs is significant; providing mutual support and encouragement will bring feelings of happiness from both. Poor knowledge and economic conditions of guardians of children with special needs will affect the child's behavior patterns-schools-orient guardians about the meaningfulness of life for children with special needs. Facilitating parents to bring their children with special needs to the disability home industry community will motivate and strengthen them. Children with special needs who play futsal during sports hours, participate in spiritual activities at the mosque, participate in various activities even if only as observers, and can express themselves well will achieve self-happiness.

### **Ownership**

Inclusive schools often need help formulating accommodating lesson plans, especially for exact subjects. Materials with high logic require cognitive intelligence, while children with special needs find this impossible. Visually impaired children have difficulty visualizing the formulas presented by the teacher, making learning less effective. Disabled children who do not have cognitive, affective, and psychomotor problems do not have significant differences from regular children. Disabled children are attached to objects that are parts of their lives, such as sticks and cell phones, which are very meaningful to them. Teachers need to appreciate what children with special needs have because particular objects can bring happiness. Positive relationships can be seen in art subjects because they showcase artistic talent. In religious sports subjects, they display meaningful togetherness and feel psychologically successful.

Fulfilling needs such as facilities provided by parents to their children will cause feelings of pleasure and gratitude, such as new bags, rulers, coloring pencils, and all school needs. Children with special needs who can keep their belongings well are considered successful.

Social relationships with peers, treatment in or outside the group, learning activities, and possession of goods are linked to indicators of positive emotions, attachment, positive relationships, meaningfulness, and success. Most parents or guardians think that the entrustment of children with special needs is caused by their past sins, causing them to be ashamed and less serious about taking care of their children. Guardians of children with special needs should get assistance and support to have hope and think optimistically (Kibria & Becerra, 2021; Wiley et al., 2022). Gratitude from mothers of children with special needs will instill positive emotions and enthusiasm for children so that they will enjoy their lives more (Chaidi & Drigas, 2022; Rashid & Seligman, 2018).

Self-happiness in the group is created if the counselor can elaborate on subject teachers, regular students, and parents to understand children with special needs with all their limitations. The counselor also plays a role in building togetherness with guardians of children with special needs to move forward to develop the potential of children. Students' self-happiness can be seen during activities outside of learning, such as playing together at recess and exercising together. Togetherness is established naturally and spontaneously, and the more often these moments occur, the more self-happiness occurs. In principle, for children with special needs to realize a meaningful life through several stages, namely the stage of suffering; the stage of self-acceptance; the stage of finding meaning; the stage of realizing meaning; and the stage of a meaningful life (Kardipranoto et al., 2021; Mansur et al., 2022).

## Conclusions

The uniformity of vision between schools, families, and communities in treating children with special needs will provide the broadest opportunity for them to develop so that personal happiness is maintained and they feel a meaningful life. The collective awareness of school members is needed to create comfortable relationships, positive emotions, bonding, and positive relationships, meaning not letting children with special needs be neglected.

Self-happiness in inclusive schools can be realized if all stakeholders apply an attitude of warmth, patience, tolerance, and empathy and accept children with special needs as they are. Counselors need to instill awareness of belonging to each other, helping, and empathy as a manifestation of the responsibility of fellow human beings, which is worth worshipping on the side of Allah.

Teachers should break the ice before learning and occasionally in the middle of learning interspersed by games. Self-happiness of children with special needs will be realized if their cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor functions can develop optimally. In addition, in various corners of the school, there are promotional sentences, pictures, or slogans that invite students to have motivation, both regular and children with special needs. Self-happiness will be maximized if facilities and accessibility for children with special needs are fulfilled, such as student play facilities.

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