

## The Influence of *Raudhatul Athfal* RA Teachers' Pedagogic Competence on Handling Children with Learning Difficulties in Seberang Ulu District, Palembang

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the Pedagogical Competence of Raudhatul Athfal (RA) Teachers in handling Children with Learning Disabilities in Seberang Ulu District, Palembang City. The researcher used a quantitative method (survey) by distributing questionnaires to RA teachers in Seberang Ulu District, Palembang City. With a sample of 72 RA teachers, the results showed that the level of Pedagogical Competence of Raudhatul Athfal (RA) Teachers in handling Children with Learning Disabilities in Seberang Ulu District, Palembang City was in the "Medium" category of 49.33% (37 teachers), "Low" of 36% (27 teachers), and "High" of 14.67% (11 teachers). Based on the average value, which is 3.28%, the level of Pedagogical Competence of RA Teachers in handling Children with Learning Disabilities in Seberang Ulu District, Palembang City is in the "MEDIUM" category.

**Keywords:** *Pedagogical Competence, Learning Disabilities*

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### INTRODUCTION

Children with Special Needs are children who experience limitations or exceptionalities, whether physical, mental-intellectual, social, or emotional, which have a significant impact on their growth or development process compared to other children of the same age. Children with Special Needs do not mean they are not smart, not talented, or not capable, but rather have special challenges that require appropriate services, assistance, attention, and handling, such as inclusive education in schools. Inclusive education is an education system that provides opportunities for all students, including those with special needs, to learn together with other students in a regular education environment. However, at the RA level, the implementation of inclusive education often faces more specific challenges, especially in dealing with children with learning difficulties. Children with learning difficulties are children who have difficulties in understanding lessons or following the learning process normally due to neurological, cognitive, or environmental factors. This condition often affects the ability to read, write, or count which are the basis

of other learning skills. Children with learning difficulties in RA require special attention in teaching strategies that can be adjusted to their needs.

In recent years, inclusive education has become a priority in the national education system to ensure that all children, including children with special needs and learning disabilities, have access to quality education. However, the challenges faced by RA teachers in implementing inclusive education are often caused by the lack of special training and experience in dealing with children with learning disabilities, not understanding the school curriculum, and the non-linearity of their undergraduate education, namely Bachelor of PAUD. Thus, they lack understanding in handling children with learning disabilities, whereas a teacher must have knowledge about how to handle children with learning disabilities, so that the learning process is effective.

In Seberang Ulu District, Palembang City, the main challenges faced by RA in handling children with learning disabilities include limited facilities, resources, not understanding the school curriculum, the non-linearity of their undergraduate education, namely Bachelor of PAUD and teacher pedagogical competence. Inadequate educational facilities, such as classrooms that are not friendly to children with special needs or inadequate educational aids, limit the effectiveness of learning. In addition, access to special learning aids and educational technology devices is also an obstacle.

According to (Hallahan and Kauffman, 2006), children with special needs are those who differ significantly from their peers in one or more developmental dimensions, thus requiring specialized and adaptive educational services. These differences may include physical impairments, cognitive delays, behavioral or emotional issues, learning difficulties, or a combination of these conditions. Such children require specifically designed educational approaches to help them overcome the barriers they face and to reach their full potential.

Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities states that children with special needs are part of persons with disabilities, defined as individuals with long-term physical, intellectual, mental, and/or sensory limitations, which in interaction with their environment may hinder or limit their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. These children require protection, services, and access to education, healthcare, and public facilities according to their conditions. This definition emphasizes the importance of social inclusion and equal rights for persons with disabilities in all aspects of life, including children who require special attention and support to develop and participate optimally in community life.

The characteristics of children with special needs vary widely depending on the type of condition they have. (Suyanto, 2010) states that these characteristics may include limitations in communication, social interaction, mobility, and cognitive functioning. For instance, children with hearing impairments may struggle to understand verbal instructions or communicate with peers, while children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) may display repetitive behaviors and experience difficulties in social interaction and understanding others' emotions. These characteristics require adaptation in teaching

methods, assistive tools, and communication strategies to ensure effective learning in inclusive settings.

Children with special needs are categorized into various groups based on the type of difficulties or impairments they experience. Kirk, Gallagher, and Coleman (2009) classify children with special needs into several categories, including those with visual impairments, hearing impairments, physical disabilities, emotional or behavioral disorders, and specific learning disabilities. For example, children with visual impairments may require learning materials in Braille or other visual aids, whereas those with physical disabilities may need classroom modifications to support easier mobility. Each category has distinct special needs and thus requires different educational approaches.

Furthermore, (Friend and Bursuck, 2019) explain that services for children with special needs must be comprehensive and holistic, encompassing not only academic aspects but also the children's social, emotional, and physical well-being. The goal of education for these children is not solely academic achievement, but also the development of life skills necessary for full participation in society.

The ability to support children with special needs is one of the essential competencies that teachers must possess, especially within the context of inclusive education at the Raudhatul Athfal (Islamic early childhood education). According to Suyanto (2009), this ability includes a deep understanding of the characteristics of children with special needs, such as visual and hearing impairments, learning difficulties, autism, and emotional disorders. This understanding enables teachers to design appropriate learning strategies. (Hamdani and Madjid, 2020) add that implementing collaborative learning has been shown to enhance teachers' competencies in supporting children with special needs more effectively. This aligns with the views of (Santoso, 2014), who emphasizes the importance of an adaptive curriculum and effective classroom management.

This understanding enables teachers to design learning strategies that accommodate each child's individual needs effectively. (Hamdani and Madjid, 2018) further emphasize that appropriate instructional strategies not only involve the use of suitable teaching methods but also the implementation of adaptive and flexible curricula that can be adjusted to each child's abilities and needs. This is consistent with (Santoso, 2014), who asserts that adaptive curricula and effective classroom management are essential to creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment, where every child feels accepted and valued. Teachers must have the skills to manage classrooms with clear and fair rules, and be capable of using positive behavior management techniques, such as positive reinforcement, to support the social and emotional development of children with special needs.

Children with learning difficulties are individuals who face obstacles in the learning process, such as in reading, writing, arithmetic, or understanding the material being taught. These difficulties are not caused by low intelligence, but rather by information processing disorders that affect their academic development (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2020). According to (Lerner, 2021), children with learning difficulties often struggle to understand abstract

concepts, have limited memory, and face issues with coordination and concentration during learning.

Learning difficulties can be categorized into several types, such as dyslexia (difficulty reading), dyscalculia (difficulty with arithmetic), and dysgraphia (difficulty writing). According to Smith and Strick (2022), children with dyslexia typically have trouble recognizing letters, reading words correctly, or comprehending texts. Meanwhile, children with dyscalculia struggle to understand numbers, perform calculations, or recognize numerical patterns. Dysgraphia, on the other hand, results in challenges in writing skills, including spelling and letter formation.

The causes of learning difficulties in children can be internal or external. Internal factors include neurological conditions, cognitive disorders, and psychological issues such as anxiety and low learning motivation (Santrock, 2021). External factors may arise from the family environment, inappropriate teaching methods, and a lack of support in the learning process (Slavin, 2022). Therefore, both teachers and parents must understand that children with learning difficulties require more adaptive teaching strategies to optimally develop their academic potential.

Pedagogical competence of early childhood education (PAUD) teachers refers to their ability to master educational theories and practices to effectively manage the learning process. According to (Mulyasa, 2018), pedagogical competence includes a teacher's ability to thoroughly understand students, plan and implement learning, evaluate learning outcomes, and develop students' potential through continuous learning processes. Teachers with strong pedagogical competence must be able to select and utilize teaching methods, strategies, and techniques appropriate to students' characteristics and the learning context.

According to (Uno, 2020), pedagogical competence encompasses not only the technical aspects of teaching but also the ability to understand and accommodate students' individual differences in abilities, interests, and learning styles. Thus, pedagogical competence includes various dimensions, from planning, implementation, and supervision, to evaluation, all of which focus on students' needs and efforts to improve educational quality.

According to (Sanjaya, 2019), a teacher's ability to support children with special needs also strongly depends on their pedagogical competence in identifying learning difficulties and designing appropriate Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Pedagogically competent teachers are better equipped to recognize students' potential, interests, and challenges, and to develop suitable intervention strategies that support their academic and social-emotional development.

Based on the aforementioned considerations, the researcher conducted a study entitled: "The Influence of Raudhatul Athfal (RA) Teachers' Pedagogical Competence on Supporting Children with Learning Difficulties in Seberang Ulu District, Palembang City."

## **METHOD**

The research method used is a survey method with a quantitative descriptive approach. A sample survey is a study that uses a questionnaire as the main data collection tool and data collection is only carried out on part of the population. This method aims to obtain data by means of a questionnaire to determine how the pedagogical competence of raudhatul athfal teachers is in dealing with children with learning difficulties.

### **A. Population and Sampling Techniques**

#### **1. Research Population**

The population in this study refers to all objects or subjects that have certain characteristics and become a generalization area for researchers to study and draw conclusions. In the context of this study, the population includes all Raudhatul Athfal (RA) teachers in Palembang City, totaling 446 teachers.

#### **2. Sample**

A sample is a part of the population studied to represent the entire population. According to Sugiyono (2012:81), a sample is a portion of the number and characteristics possessed by the population. The sample must truly represent the condition of the population, which means that the conclusions of the study taken from the sample must be generalizable to the population. Determination of the number of samples was carried out using the purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling is a sample selection technique based on certain criteria that are considered to be in accordance with the desired characteristics. The sample to be taken is in accordance with the returned questionnaire, which is 72 teachers from several schools in Seberang Ulu District, Palembang City, namely: RA Perwanida 1, RA Perwanida 2, RA Sultan Mahmud Badruddin, RA Baitul Hanan.

### **B. Research Design**

The research design used in this study is to use a survey method with a quantitative descriptive approach, where this survey uses observation and questionnaires to determine the results of research on the pedagogical competence of raudhatul athfal teachers in handling children with learning difficulties.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **RESULT**

#### **A. Descriptive Analysis**

This study employs descriptive statistics using percentage-based descriptive analysis techniques, which categorize data into three categories: high, medium, and low. Based on the calculation results, it was found that 2 teachers or 2.78% of RA (Raudhatul Athfal) teachers in Seberang Ulu District, Palembang City, have a high level of pedagogical competence in handling children with learning difficulties. As many as 67 RA teachers or 93.05% have a medium level of pedagogical competence, and 3 teachers or 4.17% fall into the low category. The average (mean) score of respondents in the study regarding the pedagogical competence of RA teachers in handling children with learning

difficulties in Seberang Ulu District, Palembang City, is 12.4%, which falls into the medium category.

The sample size in this study was calculated using the Slovin formula, with a population of 446 teachers and a 5% margin of error. Based on the calculation:

$$\text{Where: } n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

- $n$  = sample size
- $N$  = total population
- $e$  = margin of error

Once the sample size was determined, a **Stratified Random Sampling** technique was applied to ensure a representative distribution.

## B. Analysis of RA Teachers' Pedagogical Competence in Handling Children with Learning Difficulties

This competency enables identification of teachers with high proficiency levels, teachers with irregular response patterns (such as carelessness), and teachers who may be collaborating (cheating). Information obtained through the **Winsteps** program includes:

### 1. Person Measure

The Person Measure Table presents individual teacher ability data with logit information. A higher logit value indicates a higher understanding of children with learning difficulties. This correlates with the total score column, which shows the number of correct answers. The highest logit score represents the highest level of pedagogical competence in handling children with learning difficulties. For example, a teacher from **RA Perwanida 2 Palembang** has a logit score of **0.76**, indicating strong competence, with 17 correct answers out of 25 questions. On the other hand, a teacher from **RA Baitul Hanan Palembang** scored **-0.95**, indicating low competence, as none of the 25 questions were answered correctly.

### 2. Wright Map Analysis (Person-Item Map)

The Variable Map or Wright Map illustrates the distribution of respondent (teacher) comprehension and the difficulty levels of questionnaire items on the same scale. RA Perwanida 2 Palembang has the highest logit score of 0.76. Based on the map, RA Baitul Hanan Palembang also shares a similar logit score, showing that both teachers have almost the same ability in answering the test. Teachers from **RA Perwanida 1** and **RA Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin** could only correctly answer 7 out of 25 items.

## C. Discussion

This study aims to analyze the pedagogical competence of RA teachers in handling children with learning difficulties in schools in Palembang City, using a Yes-No multiple-choice test consisting of 25 questions. The results show that the overall understanding of pedagogical competence among RA teachers in handling children with

learning difficulties in schools in Seberang Ulu District, Palembang City, falls into the "medium" category. The highest percentage, 93.05% (67 teachers), are in the "medium" category, followed by 3 teachers (4.17%) in the "low" category, and only 2 teachers (2.78%) in the "high" category.

This data indicates that the **pedagogical competence of RA teachers in handling children with learning difficulties in Seberang Ulu District, Palembang City, is still far from optimal**. In other words, the current competence level still needs to be improved. The findings suggest that many RA teachers in the district still do not fully understand how to effectively handle children with learning difficulties in school settings. Therefore, based on these findings, efforts must be made to **enhance the pedagogical competence of RA teachers**, enabling them to have a better understanding and knowledge of how to support the holistic and comprehensive development of early childhood learners in educational institutions, particularly in RA (Raudhatul Athfal).

## DISCUSSION

### Overall Competence Level Remains Moderate

The descriptive analysis shows that the majority of RA teachers (93.05%) fall within the medium category of pedagogical competence in handling children with learning difficulties. Only 2.78% of teachers demonstrate high competence, while 4.17% fall into the low category. This pattern indicates that although most teachers possess a basic understanding of learning difficulties, their ability to implement effective strategies remains limited.

### Gap Between Required and Actual Competence

The mean score of 12.4 confirms that teachers' pedagogical competence is still in the medium range. This suggests a lack of mastery in essential pedagogical skills such as identifying learning difficulties, applying differentiated instruction, and designing targeted interventions. The limited number of teachers in the high-competence group indicates that expert-level understanding is rare, highlighting the urgent need for continuous capacity building.

### Rasch Analysis Reveals Variability in Individual Abilities

The Person Measure and Wright Map analysis further supports the descriptive findings by showing substantial variation in teacher abilities. Teachers with higher logit scores—such as those from RA Perwanida 2—demonstrated stronger understanding, while teachers with negative logit scores struggled to answer even basic items correctly. These discrepancies indicate uneven pedagogical preparedness across institutions, suggesting inconsistent access to training or professional development.

### Implications for Teacher Training and Professional Development

The predominance of medium-level competence implies that RA teachers may require more targeted interventions to enhance their skills in managing children with learning difficulties. Strengthening competence through structured training, mentoring systems, and ongoing workshops is essential to equip teachers with practical skills for early detection, classroom management, and individualized support.

### **Need for Systematic Support and Policy Reinforcement**

Given that learning difficulties in early childhood require prompt and accurate pedagogical responses, the current competence level poses a concern. Schools and educational authorities in Seberang Ulu District must prioritize policies that reinforce inclusive practices, ensure equitable access to professional development, and standardize competence requirements across RA institutions.

### **Conclusion of Discussion**

The findings collectively show that while some teachers demonstrate strong competence, the overall competence of RA teachers in handling children with learning difficulties remains inadequate. Improving teacher understanding and instructional skills is crucial for supporting the holistic development of early childhood learners and ensuring that learning difficulties are addressed effectively within RA settings.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the level of **Pedagogical Competence of RA Teachers** in handling **Children with Learning Difficulties in Seberang Ulu District, Palembang City** falls into the following categories:

- a. **Medium:** 49.33% (37 teachers)
- b. **Low:** 36% (27 teachers)
- c. **High:** 14.67% (11 teachers)

Based on the average score, which is **3.28%**, the level of **Pedagogical Competence of RA Teachers** in handling **Children with Learning Difficulties** in Seberang Ulu District, Palembang City is categorized as "**Medium.**"

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