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Mainstreaming inclusive education in madrasah ibtidaiyah: A study of policy, curriculum, and teachers' roles

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah faces three main challenges: informal policies without written regulations, improvised curricula without standardized guidelines, and dependence on teachers as compensatory actors. This study aims to analyze inclusive education practices in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, focusing on madrasah policies, the implementation of inclusive curricula, and teachers' roles in supporting children with special needs. This research employed a qualitative case study at Private Islamic Primary School 30 Bustanul Ulum Ambulu. Data were collected through interviews, observations, documentation, and focus group discussions, and were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis with source-method triangulation to ensure the credibility of the findings. The study found that: 1) madrasah inclusive policies are based on empathy and social justice but remain institutionally unembedded, limiting services to children with mild special needs; 2) the inclusive curriculum is implemented informally through modification, differentiation, dual learning, and individualized assistance, depending on teachers' pedagogical creativity in the classroom; and 3) teachers act as the main agents of inclusion through adaptation, assistance, motivation, emotional support, and family coordination, exceeding the support provided by the madrasah's formal institutional system. This study concludes that inclusion in madrasah exists as an empathy-based socio-pedagogical practice but has not yet been institutionalized, making it dependent on teachers' commitment and limited to children with mild special needs. This study recommends that madrasahs institutionalize inclusive education through written regulations, adaptive curricula, teacher training, accessible facilities, special assistant teachers, and family collaboration to ensure sustainable, measurable, and systemic services for children with special needs.

Keywords:
Inclusive Education; Islamic Primary Schools; Curriculum Implementation; Teacher Roles.

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INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, the provision of inclusive education continues to face serious challenges in delivering equitable educational services for children with special needs. Numerous studies indicate that children with disabilities remain highly vulnerable to educational exclusion due to limited access, inadequate institutional support, and discriminatory practices within school environments (Kasman, 2020; Syarifah, 2023). Data from Statistics Indonesia reveal a significant disparity between children with and without disabilities in terms of participation and educational continuity, with school dropout rates among children with disabilities consistently higher across all age groups. This condition is further corroborated by a UNICEF report (2023), which estimates that approximately 36% of children with disabilities in Indonesia are out of school, a figure substantially higher than that of their non-disabled peers. These findings demonstrate that the implementation of inclusive education in Indonesia has not yet fully ensured the realization of equitable, safe, and dignified educational rights for children with special needs, as mandated by the principle of education for all (Magnusson et al., 2019; Cologon, 2020).

A considerable body of previous research has examined inclusive education. This study categorizes the literature into three main strands. First, the implementation of inclusive education remains weak due to the shortage of special education teachers and the limited competence of human resources, resulting in an imbalance between students' needs and educational services (Kantavong et al., 2017; Syaadah et al., 2023; Ihsan, 2024; Nurhidayat, 2024). Second, there is a persistent mismatch between inclusive education policies and field-level practices, as indicated by the rejection of students with special needs and cases of discrimination, which reflect the weak internalization of inclusive policy (Kemendikbud, 2024; Magnusson et al., 2019; Cologon, 2020). Third, prior studies emphasize the need for curriculum adaptation, differentiated instruction, and the use of educational technology; however, such practices remain limited, particularly in community-based Islamic elementary schools or madrasah ibtidaiyah (Florian & Spratt, 2013; Hardy & Woodcock, 2014). Therefore, this study addresses a gap in the literature on inclusive education in madrasah ibtidaiyah, particularly in contexts where inclusion has not yet been institutionalized into formal policy. Its novelty lies in demonstrating that inclusion is enacted through humanistic values, informal curriculum adaptation, and teacher agency, rather than through formal policy, as an alternative model of inclusive education.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of inclusive education in madrasahs, particularly in terms of institutional policy, the implementation of an inclusive curriculum for students with special needs, and the role of teachers in supporting adaptive, humanistic, and equitable educational services. Accordingly, the research questions addressed in this study are: (1) how does the madrasah policy accommodate students with special needs? (2) how is the inclusive curriculum implemented for students with special needs? and (3) how do teachers support inclusive education practices? Thus, this study contributes to enriching the discourse on inclusive education in madrasahs by emphasizing the interconnection between policy, curriculum, and teacher roles in providing services for students with special needs. Theoretically, it broadens the discussion of inclusion within Islamic elementary education. Practically, the findings offer insights into admission strategies, student assistance, learning adaptation, and the basis for strengthening policy, teacher capacity, adaptive curricula, and humanistic, responsive, equitable, and sustainable educational services for all students.

This study is grounded in the argument that the implementation of inclusive education at Private Islamic Primary School 30 Bustanul Ulum Ambulu remains fragile, as the admission of students with special needs is driven by empathy but has not yet been supported by written policies, an inclusive curriculum, special assistant teachers, or adaptive facilities. This issue is important to examine because inclusive practices that rely solely on teachers' commitment risk becoming unsustainable, immeasurable, and limited to students with mild

disabilities. Previous studies have largely discussed inclusive education in general, while limited attention has been given to how Islamic elementary schools manage policy, curriculum adaptation, and teacher roles under conditions of structural constraint. Therefore, this study contributes by demonstrating that inclusion in madrasahs is not merely about admitting students with special needs, but also requires formal governance, documented adaptive curricula, teacher capacity building, and systematic and equitable institutional support.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of inclusive education practices in madrasah ibtidaiyah (Bazen et al., 2021). The research focused on three main aspects: madrasah policies in accommodating students with special needs, the implementation of an inclusive curriculum, and the role of teachers in supporting inclusive education. Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews with the madrasah principal, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, and teachers, as well as document analysis to ensure data richness and research validity (Fix et al., 2022). A qualitative approach was selected because inclusive education constitutes a complex practice involving policy, school culture, curriculum, and pedagogical interaction. This study adopted a case study design at MIMA 30 Bustanul Ulum Ambulu. The researcher served as the primary instrument in data collection and analysis (Teherani et al., 2015), enabling a comprehensive examination of institutional policy, curriculum models, and teacher roles within authentic educational practices (Makri & Neely, 2021).

The research site was MIMA 30 Bustanul Ulum Ambulu, Jember Regency, East Java, which was purposively selected because the madrasah admits and serves students with special needs despite not being officially designated as an inclusive school. This condition creates a distinctive dynamic in the development of madrasah policies, curriculum adaptation, and independently initiated inclusive learning practices. The study focused on three aspects: madrasah policies in accommodating students with special needs, the implementation of an inclusive curriculum, and the role of teachers in supporting inclusive education. Participants were selected using purposive sampling (Campbell et al., 2020) and included the madrasah principal, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, classroom teachers, and students, including those with special needs. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to obtain a holistic understanding of policy, curriculum models, and teacher roles in inclusive practices.

Data analysis was conducted using an inductive thematic approach iteratively throughout the research process (Ahmed et al., 2025; Laari, 2025). The analytical stages included data familiarization, coding, theme identification, and meaning. The analysis was directed at exploring three main focuses: madrasah policies in accommodating students with special needs, the implementation of an inclusive curriculum for students with special needs, and the role of teachers in supporting inclusive education. Data from interviews, observations, and documents were systematically coded and then grouped into analytical categories representing patterns of inclusive practices. The emerging themes were validated through data source triangulation to ensure the credibility of the findings. The final interpretation was conducted by linking thematic patterns to a coherent conceptual framework of inclusive education practices in community-based madrasahs.

The trustworthiness of the data in this study was ensured through methodological and source triangulation to establish the credibility of the findings regarding madrasah policies in accommodating students with special needs, the implementation of an inclusive curriculum, and the role of teachers in supporting inclusive education (Moon, 2019). Methodological triangulation was conducted by comparing data obtained from in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, while source triangulation involved the madrasah

principal, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, classroom teachers, and students. To strengthen validity, the study also conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with madrasah leaders and teachers to verify and clarify findings related to the three research focuses. This process enabled cross-confirmation across data sources and reduced interpretive bias. All stages were carried out systematically to enhance scientific rigor, as recommended in qualitative research (Bengtsson, 2016; Bazen et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Madrasah policy on inclusive education for children with special needs

The practice of inclusive education at MIMA 30 Bustanul Ulum Ambulu reflects a fundamental dilemma between a humanistic ethos and limited structural capacity. The admission of students with special needs, driven primarily by compassion and parental pressure rather than formal regulation, indicates that the service remains emergency-based and reactive. The absence of written policies has resulted in sporadic curriculum adaptation without documented individualized plans. The lack of special assistant teachers and limited adaptive facilities has forced the madrasah to restrict admission to students with mild special needs. Implicitly, these findings reveal a fragile foundation that threatens the sustainability of inclusive education.

Regarding the madrasah policy at MIMA 30 Bustanul Ulum Ambulu, this issue was conveyed by E (28), who stated, "Initially, we were reluctant to accept the student, but the parents pleaded for their child to be admitted because schools for children with special needs in Ambulu District were already full. Finally, together with the vice principal for curriculum affairs and several teachers, we discussed the matter and decided to accept the child. Compassion and empathy were the main reasons that encouraged us to accept students with special needs" (Interview, 18/08/2025). Meanwhile, YK, the vice principal for curriculum affairs at MIMA 30 Bustanul Ulum Ambulu, stated, "The madrasah does not have an official written policy on inclusive education contained in curriculum guideline documents or school regulations for students with special needs" (Interview, 18/08/2025). Thus, these findings indicate that the admission of students with special needs in the madrasah is driven more by empathy and social needs than by a formal institutional policy framework. This condition reflects a personal commitment to inclusion, yet it remains vulnerable to inconsistent implementation because it is not supported by clear regulations and operational guidelines.

Table 1
Findings on Inclusive Education Policy

Main Theme	Analytical Category	Empirical Indicators	Representative Evidence
Humanistic-Based Admission of Students with Special Needs	Ethical orientation and social justice	Admission decisions are driven by empathy, humanitarian values, and parental requests	The madrasah principal and teachers emphasized compassion and social justice as the main reasons for admitting students with special needs
Absence of Formal Inclusive Education Policy	Informal governance structure	There are no written policies, inclusive curriculum documents, or specific regulations concerning students with special needs	Inclusive practices rely on internal agreements rather than formal institutional guidelines
Informal Curriculum Adaptation	Flexibility of curriculum policy at the madrasah level	Adaptation of the Merdeka Curriculum, modification of learning materials, and adjustment of teaching methods based on the capacities of students with special needs	Teachers informally adjust learning content and pedagogy without documented individualized learning plans

Limited Human Resources and Facilities	Structural constraints in inclusive service policy	The absence of special assistant teachers, limited adaptive facilities, and admission restricted to students with mild special needs	Institutional capacity limits the scope of inclusive education services that the madrasah can provide

Source: Processed by the researcher, 2025.

Table 1 shows that inclusive education practices at MIMA 30 Bustanul Ulum Ambulu have four main characteristics. First, the decision to admit students with special needs is grounded in humanistic ethics, driven by empathy, social justice, and urgent parental requests, rather than by formal regulations. Second, the madrasah does not have written policies, specific curriculum documents, or institutional rules governing services for students with special needs. Third, curriculum and instructional adaptations are implemented informally by modifying the Merdeka Curriculum, without documented individualized learning plans. Fourth, the madrasah's capacity remains highly limited, as indicated by the absence of special needs support teachers, the lack of adaptive facilities, and the restriction of admission to students with mild disabilities only.

Based on the findings, a fundamental dichotomy emerges between the madrasah's humanistic ethos and its structural capacity. The admission of students with special needs, driven by empathy and parental pressure, shows that the madrasah functions more as an emergency solution than as a provider of planned inclusive services. The absence of formal policies makes inclusion governance sporadic and dependent on teachers' initiatives, with no guarantee of sustainability. Although informal curriculum adaptation offers flexibility, the lack of documented individualized learning plans weakens objective evaluation and increases subjectivity. More critically, the absence of special needs support teachers and adaptive facilities restricts services to students with mild disabilities. Thus, inclusive practices remain vulnerable if teachers' personal commitment declines, because no binding regulatory framework systematically supports or institutionalizes them.

Inclusive curriculum implementation for students with special needs

The implementation of an inclusive curriculum in madrasahs becomes a major challenge when it is not supported by formal guideline documents. At MIMA 30 Bustanul Ulum Ambulu, learning practices for students with special needs are carried out improvisationally, relying on modifications to the Merdeka Curriculum and teachers' initiatives, without documented individualized learning plans. As a result, the dual learning systemregular classroom instruction and separate individualized assistance has become the main strategy. However, the absence of standardized guidelines makes the learning process and the evaluation of students' progress lack full certainty and accountability.

Regarding curriculum implementation at MIMA 30 Bustanul Ulum Ambulu, E (28), the head of the madrasah, stated, "Although we do not have an inclusive curriculum, we use two teaching approaches: general classroom instruction and individual assistance. Usually, students with special needs are taken to the teachers' room, where the teacher explains the material again slowly" (Interview, 18/08/2025). Furthermore, AR (42), a sixth-grade teacher, explained, "In teaching, I still refer to the national standards and the Merdeka Curriculum; however, some competencies are reduced because students with special needs experience difficulties in reading, counting, and writing. In the teaching process, I try to be more flexible and provide maximum learning assistance" (Interview, 25/08/2025). Meanwhile, AW (45), a fourth-grade teacher, stated, "This child has difficulty reading, maintaining focus, and interacting with peers. In teaching, we adjust the learning process to the child's condition because students with special needs require special attention" (Interview, 25 August 2025). These findings indicate that the inclusive curriculum at MIMA 30 remains informal, relies on

teachers' initiatives, involves competency adaptation and individualized assistance, and has not yet been supported by a systematic, institutional, and sustainable inclusive curriculum framework.

Table 2
Implementation Model for the Inclusive Madrasah Curriculum

Main Theme	Analytical Category	Empirical Indicators	Representative Evidence
Absence of a Formal Inclusive Curriculum	Informal curriculum governance	The madrasah continues to use the general curriculum and has not yet developed documented inclusive curriculum guidelines	Inclusive education practices are implemented without a formal curriculum framework specifically designed to regulate services for students with special needs
Dual Teaching System	Adaptive instructional strategy	Learning is conducted through a combination of regular classroom instruction and individualized assistance for students with special needs	Students with special needs continue to participate in regular classroom learning and receive additional individualized explanations from teachers
Curriculum and Competency Adaptation	Flexibility of learning outcomes	Teachers simplify core competencies and adjust learning targets based on students' abilities	Learning objectives are modified to align with the capacities and individual needs of students with special needs
Flexible and Individualized Learning	Differentiated pedagogical approach	Teachers employ varied teaching methods, differentiate tasks, and provide follow-up assistance after classroom learning	Teachers implement flexible instruction and provide individualized support according to each student's development

Source: Processed by the researcher, 2025.

Table 2 shows that inclusion practices at MIMA 30 Bustanul Ulum Ambulu have four main characteristics. First, the madrasah does not have a formal inclusive curriculum; therefore, learning still refers to the general curriculum without specific guidelines for students with special needs. Second, the madrasah implements a dual learning system, in which students with special needs participate in regular classroom instruction while also receiving individualized assistance from teachers. Third, teachers adapt the curriculum by simplifying core competencies and adjusting learning outcomes according to each student's ability. Fourth, the pedagogical approach is flexible and differentiated, including variations in teaching methods, task differentiation, and continued support beyond regular class hours. In brief, inclusion practices are implemented informally and depend heavily on teachers' creativity in the field.

Based on the findings, the madrasah implements inclusion through pedagogical improvisation rather than a planned curriculum design. The absence of a formal curriculum constitutes the root problem, as the dual learning system, competency adaptation, and differentiated approaches implemented by teachers are not supported by regulatory frameworks or standardized guidelines. Consequently, although the dual learning strategy regular classroom instruction combined with individualized assistance and task flexibility demonstrate teachers' responsiveness to the needs of students with special needs, these practices remain subjective and difficult to measure. The absence of documented individual learning outcomes also makes the evaluation of students' progress unclear. Furthermore, full dependence on teachers' initiatives creates a risk of discontinuity, because when the teachers concerned are transferred or unavailable, there are no operational standards that can serve as a reference. This condition reflects weak institutional mechanisms while also affirming the urgency of developing formal and documented inclusive curriculum guidelines.

Teachers' roles in supporting inclusive education for children with special needs

In practice, the implementation of inclusive education requires teachers not merely to transfer knowledge, but also to design a learning ecosystem that is responsive to diversity. This approach is rooted in efforts to equalize access through integration into regular classrooms, which is subsequently strengthened by continuous academic interventions beyond regular instructional hours. Curriculum adjustment and flexibility in teaching methods are therefore essential, while the strengthening of psychological aspects through appreciation and active engagement serves as a vital foundation for fostering students' self-confidence, intrinsic motivation, and emotional well-being in a holistic and sustainable manner.

The interview findings show that teachers act as both facilitators and mentors in inclusive education through instructional adjustments and individualized assistance for students with special needs. AW (45) explained, "Inclusive education means that teachers provide equal learning opportunities for all students, including those with special needs, by adjusting instruction to their abilities. Without special attention, they will be left behind" (Interview, 15/09/2025). Similarly, AR (42), a sixth-grade teacher, stated, "Students with special needs usually find it difficult to focus on a crowded classroom, so I take them to the teachers' room during breaks or after lessons for additional assistance. I repeat the material until they truly understand it, even two or three times if necessary" (Interview, 15/09/2025). Based on the interview results, teachers function as facilitators and mentors by providing equal learning opportunities for students with special needs through material adjustment. Individualized assistance is provided outside regular instructional hours, accompanied by repeated explanations two or three times to ensure understanding and prevent learning gaps.

Table 3
Teachers' Roles in Supporting Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs

Main Theme	Analytical Category	Empirical Indicator	Representative Evidence
Facilitation of Inclusive Learning	Equal access and participation in learning	Students with special needs learn in mainstream classrooms with instructional adjustments according to individual abilities	Teachers ensure equal learning opportunities for students with special needs through integration in regular classrooms and the adaptation of learning activities according to their needs.
Intensive Support for Students with Special Needs	Continuous academic support	Individual assistance is provided at school and supported through coordination with parents at home	Teachers provide ongoing assistance to help students understand learning materials through individualized support and collaboration with families.
Curriculum and Instructional Adaptation	Differentiation of materials and tasks	Learning materials are simplified and tasks are modified according to students' abilities	Teachers adjust the curriculum and instructional processes to ensure learning objectives are achievable in accordance with the capacities and needs of students with special needs.
Flexible Instructional Strategies	Adaptation of learning processes	Learning environments are flexibly arranged and instructions are repeated as needed	Teachers implement adaptive instructional strategies to enhance students' concentration, engagement, and understanding during the learning process.
Strengthening Students' Social and Emotional Development	Development of self-confidence and learning motivation	Positive reinforcement and participation opportunities are provided to students with special needs	Teachers foster students' self-confidence, learning motivation, and emotional well-being through positive reinforcement and active engagement in classroom activities.

Source: Processed by the researcher, 2025.

Table 3 shows that teachers play a central role in supporting the implementation of inclusive education for students with special needs through various pedagogical strategies and individualized assistance. This role is realized through the facilitation of inclusive learning, which provides equal access to and participation in regular classrooms. In addition, teachers provide intensive assistance both within the school environment and through coordination with families to ensure the continuity of learning support. Curriculum and instructional adaptations are carried out by simplifying materials and modifying assignments according to students' abilities. Teachers also apply flexible teaching strategies through adjustments to the learning environment and repeated instruction. Beyond academic aspects, teachers contribute to strengthening students' social and emotional development by providing motivation, appreciation, and opportunities for active participation.

Based on the findings, inclusive learning is not merely oriented toward physical access but also toward the adjustment of pedagogical systems that are responsive to the diverse needs of students. Teachers implement curriculum differentiation and task modification as forms of structural adaptation, while flexible strategies, such as arranging the learning environment and repeating instructions, serve as technical instruments to accommodate varied learning styles. Intensive assistance involving synergy between school and home reflects a sustainable holistic approach rather than an incidental form of support. Psychologically, social and emotional reinforcement functions as a catalyst for enhancing students' self-efficacy, which in turn contributes to active participation and academic resilience. Thus, this practice not only addresses individual needs but also builds a learning ecosystem that values diversity, empowers all stakeholders, and strengthens the foundations of educational equity and justice in the long term.

Discussion

This study found that inclusive education at MIMA 30 Bustanul Ulum Ambulu operates through three main findings. First, the madrasah's inclusive policy is grounded in empathy, humanistic values, and social justice; however, it has not yet been institutionalized through written regulations, curriculum guidelines, adaptive facilities, or special assistant teachers. Consequently, the admission of students with special needs remains limited to those with mild barriers. Second, the inclusive curriculum is implemented informally through modifications of the general curriculum, simplification of learning outcomes, task differentiation, dual teaching practices, individual assistance, and additional support, the success of which depends largely on teachers' pedagogical creativity. Third, teachers serve as the main actors of inclusion through material adaptation, flexible strategies, individual mentoring, motivational reinforcement, socio-emotional support, and family coordination. As a result, the sustainability of inclusion relies more on teachers' commitment than on a formal institutional system. Thus, inclusive education in the madrasah is rooted in a humanistic ethos but is carried out informally through teacher improvisation without written regulations and systematic support, making its sustainability fragile and requiring stronger formal institutional reinforcement.

This study reflects the social reality of the gap between inclusive aspirations and institutional capacity in primary education. Amid the national commitment to promoting equitable and inclusive education, many madrasahs continue to face limitations in human resources and supporting facilities (Artiles et al., 2006). This informal and value-based inclusive practice illustrates the irony that inclusion is sustained by individual moral commitment rather than by a structured policy design. This condition has become increasingly relevant alongside growing public awareness of the rights of children with special needs, which contrasts with the limited supporting infrastructure available in practice (Srinivasan, 2025). This issue deserves public attention because it directly affects the future of marginalized children with special needs and, at the same time, tests the extent to which

educational institutions are able to translate humanitarian values into measurable and sustainable services.

Theoretically, the findings of this study indicate that inclusive education in madrasahs can be understood through Booth and Ainscow's (2011) Index for Inclusion, which emphasizes the interrelationship between inclusive cultures, policies, and practices. The madrasah has developed an inclusive culture through empathy, humanistic values, and social justice in admitting children with special needs. However, this culture has not yet been fully institutionalized through written regulations, curriculum guidelines, adaptive facilities, and special assistant teachers, thereby creating a gap between inclusive culture and inclusive policy (Materechera, 2020; Kiblen et al., 2024; Quiroz-Martinez & Rushton, 2024). At the level of practice, inclusion is implemented through curriculum modification, simplification of learning outcomes, task differentiation, dual teaching practices, individual assistance, and additional support. These findings are consistent with Florian and Black-Hawkins' (2011) Inclusive Pedagogy and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, as the success of inclusion depends on teachers' creativity, family coordination, and support from the broader madrasah ecosystem (Sadownik, 2023).

This study provides an understanding that inclusive education is not merely concerned with policy documents or formal curricula, but with how humanitarian values are translated into concrete actions in the classroom. The resource limitations identified in this study are not the end of the story; rather, they reflect that the spirit of inclusion can emerge from ethical awareness, even amid structural constraints (Riehl, 2000; Norwich, 2022). Teachers in this madrasah demonstrate that professional agency and moral commitment can compensate for the absence of formal policies, at least in addressing mild needs (Salifu et al., 2025; Alonzo et al., 2025). However, the fundamental lesson is that reliance on individuals is fragile and unsustainable. Genuine inclusive success requires systemic recognition of the values already embedded in the community, as well as the transformation of these values into structured and measurable policies supported by adequate resources, so that inclusion does not remain a heroic individual practice but becomes a robust institutional system.

Compared with the literature that emphasizes the integration of values, regulations, and support systems (Iniesto & Bossu, 2023; Soeharto et al., 2024), this study shows that inclusion in faith-based madrasahs develops through a different pathway: humanistic ethics and informal practice. Unlike previous studies that highlight standardized curricula and individualized learning plans (Sartinah & Murtadlo, 2021; Supit et al., 2025), these findings emphasize pedagogical adaptation and teacher–student relationships as the main enablers of inclusion. The findings are also consistent with studies that identify the central role of teachers in implementing inclusion at the micro level (Deroncele-Acosta & Ellis, 2024; Shi et al., 2025). However, this study offers novelty by highlighting how teachers' pedagogical roles extend into social and collaborative domains, including home visits and intensive coordination with parents (Aziz et al., 2022; Tambunan et al., 2023). Thus, inclusion is understood not only as an instructional practice but also as a relational process that depends on informal networks built by teachers, thereby enriching the discourse on inclusive education in the madrasah context.

Based on these findings, several practical recommendations can be proposed. First, madrasahs need to initiate the development of written policies on inclusive education, including admission guidelines, curriculum adaptation, and mechanisms for evaluating services for students with special needs, to reduce dependence on individual teacher initiatives. Second, the Education Office and the Ministry of Religious Affairs need to allocate structured training for regular teachers on inclusive learning strategies and the management of students with special needs, while gradually promoting the recruitment of special assistant teachers. Third, madrasahs can begin by providing simple adaptive facilities, such as support rooms and basic learning aids. Fourth, coordination with parents should be institutionalized

through regular forums to strengthen learning support at home. Fifth, the development of learning communities among inclusive madrasahs can serve as a platform for sharing good practices. Finally, local governments need to ensure a dedicated budget for inclusive education as a policy priority to guarantee the systemic sustainability of the program.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that inclusive education at MIMA 30 Bustanul Ulum Ambulu has emerged as a socio-pedagogical practice but has not yet developed into an established institutional system. The madrasah demonstrates a moral commitment to admitting children with special needs through empathy, humanistic values, and social justice; however, this commitment has not yet been translated into written regulations, an adaptive curriculum, supporting facilities, or special assistant teachers. Consequently, inclusion can only accommodate students with mild barriers and remains highly dependent on teachers' capacity. Critically, this condition reveals the paradox of inclusion, the value of acceptance has grown, but the supporting structure is not yet ready. This situation requires the institutionalization of inclusive values into madrasah management, financing, and governance in a consistent manner. Thus, the success of inclusion remains personal, informal, and vulnerable, as it is sustained more by teachers' commitment than by a planned and sustainable madrasah policy design.

This study contributes to enriching the discourse on inclusive education by demonstrating that inclusion does not always require formal policy as a prerequisite but can be rooted in cultural values and the ethical commitment of institutions. These findings expand the understanding of policy implementation at the micro level, particularly in the context of faith-based madrasahs with unique institutional characteristics. Practically, this study contributes by mapping informal inclusive practices that may serve as an initial model for other madrasahs facing similar limitations. In addition, this study highlights the importance of systemic recognition of teachers' strategic roles as the frontline actors of inclusion, while also emphasizing the need to strengthen institutional capacity, develop operational guidelines, and enhance school family collaboration as a foundation for the sustainability of inclusive education.

This study has several limitations. First, the scope of the study is limited to a single madrasah; therefore, the findings cannot be broadly generalized to other madrasah contexts with different characteristics. Second, the study focuses on policy, curriculum, and teachers' roles, and has not explored in depth the perspectives of students with special needs and parents regarding their experiences of inclusion. Third, the qualitative approach employed in this study limits the quantitative measurement of the effectiveness of inclusive practices. Future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies across madrasahs, develop evaluation instruments to assess the impact of inclusion on the academic and socio-emotional outcomes of students with special needs, and examine strategies for transforming informal inclusive practices into institutionalized policies through a participatory approach involving all educational stakeholders.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Saihan: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Investigation; Methodology; Project Administration; Writing Original Draft; Writing Review & Editing. **Abdul Karim**: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Investigation; Methodology: Writing Original Draft; Writing Review & Editing. Software; Supervision; Validation. **Anjum Younas Raja**: Formal analysis; Resources; Validation; Visualization; Writing Review & Editing.

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