Jurnal Profesi Pendidikan dan Keguruan ALPHATEACH, Vol. 6 No. 1, 81 - 88
ISSN: 2809-462X

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEACCH (TREATMENT AND EDUCATION OF AUTISTIC AND RELATED COMMUNICATIONS-HANDICAPED CHILDREN) METHOD IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION LEARNING AT AGAPE WONOSOBO INCLUSIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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ARTICLE INFO

***Article history*:**
Received: 28/04/2026
Accepted: 01/07/2026
Published: 03/07/2026

***Keywords*:**
Inclusive School
Structured Visual Learning
TEACCH Method

ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of the Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communications-Handicapped Children (TEACCH) method in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SD Inklusi Agape Wonosobo, as well as to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that the implementation of the TEACCH method at SD Inklusi Agape Wonosobo was realized through the use of structured visual aids, including picture cards, daily visual schedules, and projector media, integrated with lecture, storytelling, inquiry, and habituation methods. Learning was conducted in a repetitive and incremental manner to accommodate the limited long-term memory of autistic students. Evaluation was carried out continuously through daily material repetition with gradual content addition. Supporting factors included the availability of varied learning facilities and infrastructure, as well as the competence and dedication of educators in implementing differentiated and personalized instruction. The primary inhibiting factors stemmed from the characteristics of the students themselves, namely limited long-term memory retention and significant heterogeneity in individual comprehension abilities, which demanded intensive individualized attention. Nevertheless, through consistent repetition and patient guidance, students demonstrated meaningful learning outcomes, including the ability to memorize daily prayers independently without teacher assistance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in developing students' character, knowledge, and skills. In an inclusive education system, all learners, including children with special educational needs, are entitled to receive appropriate educational services that are tailored to their individual characteristics and needs. One group that requires particular attention in educational practice is children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), who commonly experience challenges in

communication, social interaction, and adaptive responsiveness, thereby requiring structured and individualized instructional approaches.

Despite various educational interventions being developed for children with autism, challenges remain in ensuring consistent learning structure, environmental clarity, and behavioral support in classroom settings. One instructional approach that has been widely recognized for addressing these needs is the TEACCH method. TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children) is a structured teaching approach designed to support individuals with autism through visual organization, predictable routines, and environmental adaptation. Its application is considered relevant in improving learning engagement and independence among students with ASD. The TEACCH curriculum encourages the development of their language and social skills. It provides models for communication and other activities. The TEACCH principles are easy to use and learn. This flexible curriculum is specifically designed for children with autism and is characterized by the use of structures and features that combine visual learning with best-in-class learning experiences.

Agape Elementary School in Wonosobo is committed to inclusive education and plays a key role in providing high-quality, adaptive educational opportunities. Considering the learning styles and special needs of children with autism, the application of the TEACCH method in the context of Islamic Religious Education at Agape Elementary School in Wonosobo is highly relevant for research. Therefore, this study was designed with the primary objective of comprehensively examining the implementation of the TEACCH method in Islamic Religious Education for children with autism at Agape Elementary School in Wonosobo.

We sincerely hope that the results of this study will not only outline the effectiveness and challenges of Islamic Religious Education but also provide concrete, evidence-based recommendations that can be immediately implemented by teachers, parents, and school administrators. Our ultimate goal is to continuously improve the quality of religious education for autistic children, so they can fully understand and internalize Islamic values tailored to their abilities, learning styles, and individual characteristics. This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design conducted through a field survey, in which the researcher interacts directly with the research setting to obtain empirical data. Qualitative descriptive research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of social phenomena as they occur naturally in their context through systematic interpretation of field data.

In this study, data were collected through direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation to capture information related to the implementation of the TEACCH method in learning for children with autism spectrum disorder. Observation was used to examine classroom practices and student learning behavior, while interviews were conducted with teachers and relevant stakeholders to explore their experiences and perspectives. Documentation was used to support the findings through relevant school records and learning materials. According to Sugiyono (2019), qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena in depth and present findings based on empirical evidence obtained from the field. This study focuses on Islamic Religious Education at Agape Wonosobo Inclusive Elementary School and was conducted with students and teachers responsible for Islamic Religious Education at Agape Wonosobo Inclusive Elementary School as subjects. The informants for this study were the principal and Islamic Religious Education teachers at Agape Wonosobo Inclusive Elementary School.

Data collection techniques were carried out through participant observation, guided and in-depth interviews, and documentation, with the main instrument being researchers supported by observation sheets, interview guidelines, and supporting documents. Data validity was verified through internal validity, external validity, reliability, and validity testing, including observation, triangulation, and participant verification. Data analysis was conducted interactively throughout the data collection, presentation, and summary stages to obtain an overview of comprehensive educational initiatives for students with special needs.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research approach, which is a field survey in which researchers interact directly with the environment and obtain data. According to Sugiyono (2019), qualitative research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of phenomena through observation, interviews, and documentation, as well as to present systematic, fact-based explanations. This study focuses on Islamic Religious Education at Agape Wonosobo Inclusive Elementary School and was conducted with students and teachers responsible for Islamic Religious Education at Agape Wonosobo Inclusive Elementary School as subjects. The informants for this study were the principal and Islamic Religious Education teachers at Agape Wonosobo Inclusive Elementary School.

Data collection in this study was conducted using participant observation, semi-structured and in-depth interviews, and documentation. The researcher acted as the primary instrument, supported by observation sheets, interview guidelines, and relevant supporting documents to ensure systematic data gathering in the field. The validity of the data was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, as well as participant checking (member checking) to confirm the accuracy of the information obtained. Data analysis was carried out interactively following the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. These stages were conducted continuously during the data collection process to produce a comprehensive understanding of educational practices for students with special needs.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data obtained through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation at Agape Wonosobo Inclusive Elementary School, it was found that the application of the Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communications-Handicapped Children (TEACCH) method in Islamic Religious Education, learning is carried out through a structured visual learning approach and is adapted to the circumstances and special needs of students with autism spectrum disorders. The implementation of this method involves several key elements, including the use of teaching media such as flashcards, daily visual schedules, and projectors.

The Islamic Religious Education learning process at this school is implemented through a progressive instructional approach that emphasizes controlled repetition as a core pedagogical strategy. In this approach, teachers introduce learning materials in small, manageable portions and consistently review previously learned content before proceeding to new material. This method is applied across various PAI topics, including ablution procedures, prayer movements, and daily prayer memorization, to strengthen students' understanding through reinforcement and continuity.

This instructional pattern reflects principles of mastery learning, where repetition is used to ensure that students achieve adequate understanding before advancing to more complex content. As explained by the teacher in the interview: "...usually we teach one letter of the alphabet per day, then they write or trace the letter following the example. For practice, we usually prepare pictures of activities that they have to practice step by step, for example the takbir movement in prayer is like this, the picture is like this, then they imitate and practice it..." This demonstrates the use of visual modeling and guided imitation as part of structured learning reinforcement.

In addition to the TEACCH method, Islamic Religious Education learning is integrated with several complementary methods, including lectures, storytelling, inquiry, and practical exercises. These diverse and flexible methods are implemented to ensure students remain engaged and absorb the material more effectively, adapting to their individual abilities and characteristics. The use of a variety of teaching materials has been shown to positively contribute to the effectiveness and smoothness of the learning process. Visual aids such as flashcards and illustrated daily schedules help students process information more concretely and retain what is presented.

The interview results also showed that the variety of teaching materials increased students' intrinsic motivation to participate in teaching and learning activities. "...of course, learning media is very influential in the smoothness of the learning process, children are more enthusiastic because the media used are not monotonous and varied, learning media such as pictures and visual schedules make it easier for children to remember what is in the contents of the picture because it is interesting and colorful...".

Learning assessment at Agape Inclusive Elementary School in Wonosobo is designed as a mechanism for continuous strengthening of understanding, not just as a measure of academic achievement. Teachers conduct evaluations by reviewing material daily with gradual teaching. The principle applied is to ensure that all previous material has been understood before introducing new material. As revealed in the following interview, "...we continue to review what has been learned, and learn it little by little. For example, today we learn the procedures for ablution, first rinsing the mouth, cleaning the mouth, washing the face, then tomorrow we will add the next pillar, but what was taught yesterday we repeat again...".

The main factors driving the implementation of the TEACCH method include two aspects: infrastructure availability and teaching staff competency. In terms of facilities, schools provide a variety of teaching aids, including projectors, picture cards, plasticine, and wooden blocks, to foster a learning environment suitable for students with special needs. From the teaching staff's perspective, teachers implement individualized learning differentiation, providing personalized attention and support based on each student's specific difficulties.

The main inhibiting factor comes from the intrinsic characteristics of autistic students, namely limited long-term memory and comprehension abilities that vary greatly between individuals. This situation requires teachers to review the material every day, while providing in-depth individual explanations, as expressed in the interview "...the obstacle is because they tend not to be able to remember for a long time so we have to keep repeating every day the material that has been delivered so that it sticks in their memory and becomes a habit, also because the comprehension ability of each child is different, making us have to explain repeatedly to several children with different problems and understanding of the material too...".

The results of the study indicate that the implementation of the TEACCH method at Agape Wonosobo Inclusive Elementary School is in accordance with the core principles of the method,

especially the structured teaching component. This emphasizes the importance of structured teaching, organized daily routines, work systems, and predictable routines as key strategies to promote the development of students with autism (Mesibov, G., 2005). The use of picture cards and visual daily schedules as activity guides is a concrete example of the application of the principles of visual structured teaching, which is the basis of the TEACCH method.

This is in line with the main objective formulated by the teacher in the following interview, "...the main objective itself is for children on the autism spectrum to acquire social skills and help change their perception of the social environment in a positive and structured way by using visual aids...". This result is consistent with the findings of Anissa Sa'adah and Pramono, who found that the application of the TEACCH method to the learning process of autistic students in special needs schools clearly contributed to the development of routines, independence, and social skills through the consistent use of visual systems (Sa'adah, Pramono, 2022). Sanz-Cervera et al. also confirmed in a review that TEACCH-based interventions are highly effective in improving social adaptation skills and reducing maladaptive behaviors in participants with autism spectrum disorders (Sanz-Cervera, 2018).

The implementation of structured routines with a fixed daily schedule, in which each activity is allocated a specific time slot, reflects the principle of predictability in the TEACCH method. Through this predictable structure, students with autism are supported in developing cognitive associations between time, activity, and expected behavior, which gradually contributes to the formation of more independent and organized behavioral patterns.

In this context, the consistent use of structured routines helps reduce uncertainty in the learning environment, allowing students to anticipate what will happen next and respond more appropriately to instructional demands. As emphasized by DeOlinda, one of the main strengths of the TEACCH approach lies in its ability to minimize student anxiety while increasing engagement in learning activities by providing a clear and stable learning structure. These characteristics align with the classroom implementation observed in this study, where routine-based scheduling supports student participation and behavioral consistency.

Visual media offers a variety of useful methods for increasing the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and improving autism therapy. Dianita Syifa et al. explain that autistic students generally tend to be visual thinkers, so information presented in a visual format is easier to process and remember than information presented solely verbally (Dianita Syifa, 2024). This explains why visual aids, such as the picture cards used by Agape Wonosobo Inclusive Elementary School, help students understand abstract concepts in Islamic Religious Education, such as the sequence of prayer movements or ablution, in a more concrete and practical way. This can be explained by the general tendency of students with autism spectrum disorders to process visual information better than verbal information. Picture cards present information in a more concrete and understandable form, thereby reducing the cognitive load on students when understanding abstract concepts in Islamic Religious Education.

The diversification of media, from projectors and picture cards to manipulatives like plasticine and wooden blocks, also contributes to increased extrinsic student motivation. Fajarwati Desi and Baharuddin found that the use of varied teaching materials and media in inclusive learning contexts has been proven effective in maintaining the attention and enthusiasm of students with special needs, while providing a richer, multisensory learning experience (Fajarwati Desi, Baharuddin, 2024). In her research at SLB Bhakti Luhur Malang, Marce Selvi confirmed that

implementing the TEACCH method, which includes the use of engaging visual media, significantly improved reading comprehension and concentration in autistic students (Marce Selvi, 2021).

A variety of visual stimuli prevents boredom during learning and allows for a richer multisensory learning experience for students with special educational needs.

The study showed that teachers at Agape Inclusive Elementary School in Wonosobo consistently apply differentiated learning principles to meet the diverse needs of their students. This approach consists of two phases: First, the curriculum is presented to all students in the class; then, students are given the opportunity to work independently on the material and receive intensive individual support.

The Ministry of Education and Culture, in its guidelines on inclusive education, emphasizes that providing high-quality inclusive education requires adaptations to the curriculum, methods, and learning approaches that meet the individual needs of each student with special needs (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017). Wiyani highlighted that when working with children with special needs, teachers must not only be proficient in the teaching materials but also have the ability to understand the individual characteristics of students and develop learning interventions tailored to the nature and level of difficulties faced (Wiyani, N. A., 2014).

The flexibility of the methods used in selecting and combining the basic principles of all other teaching content shows a high level of pedagogical competence and is one of the most important aspects of inclusive education in this school. This teacher role aligns with Hakiman's research findings. Thanks to the teachers' ability to respond to children individually, empathetically, patiently, and adaptively, the Al-Firdaus inclusive school in Surakarta has achieved significant success in Islamic religious education for autistic students (Hakiman, 2021).

Nurdin and Usman added that implementing an effective learning process depends not only on selecting appropriate methods but also on the quality and consistency of teachers' implementation (Nurdin and Usman, 2011). The role of teachers, which goes beyond traditional classroom tasks, makes them key agents of change in inclusive education. Teachers' patience, persistence, and empathy for each student's individual needs are non-technical factors that are just as important as the availability of learning tools and methods. The daily evaluation strategy used at Agape Wonosobo inclusive elementary school is an appropriate pedagogical response to the cognitive characteristics of students with autism. Darsono et al. explain that effective learning is essentially a process of habit formation through planned, structured, and continuous repetition (drills and practices), which allows the transfer of information obtained from short-term memory to long-term memory (Darsono et al., 2000).

Through the implementation of controlled repetition, the gradual delivery of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material provides the necessary space for cognitive consolidation, which is essential for students with autism before introducing new content. In their study on the application of the TEACCH method to develop independent learning skills in children with special needs, Firdaus and Pradipta emphasized that structured and consistent repetition is a crucial component of the TEACCH method. This strategy provides students with ample opportunities to practice the skills they have learned (Firdaus, I., and Pradipta, R. 2020). The real success of this strategy is demonstrated by the students' ability to memorize daily prayers independently and without teacher assistance. This is an indicator of the success of internalizing religious values into students' daily lives. As conveyed in the interview, "...the result is that if we patiently teach and

repeat the materials, they will remember what they have repeated. For example, the prayer before studying earlier, they can memorize it themselves without guidance or assistance from the teacher...".

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of the TEACCH method in Islamic Religious Education at Agape Wonosobo Inclusive Elementary School has been structured and adaptive through the use of visual aids in the form of picture cards and daily visual schedules, complemented by lecture, storytelling, inquiry, and routine methods. The learning process is iterative and gradual, to accommodate the limitations of long-term memory of autistic students, with assessments designed as a mechanism to strengthen ongoing understanding. Key factors for successful implementation include the availability of diverse infrastructure and teachers' commitment to individualized instruction. At the same time, limited long-term memory and varying comprehension abilities are significant barriers that require intensive and ongoing support. Nevertheless, through consistent repetition and patient guidance, the students achieved remarkable learning success, including the ability to independently memorize daily prayers. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the TEACCH method in teaching Islamic Religious Education to students with autism spectrum disorders in inclusive elementary schools.

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