

# **The Role of Generation Z as Parents in Parenting Children with Special Needs in Tanjung Siram Village, Bilah Hulu Subdistrict, Labuhan Batu Regency**

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## **Abstract**

Children with special needs (CWSN) in Tanjung Siram Village, Bilah Hulu District, continue to face various challenges, such as social discrimination, limited access to education, and a lack of understanding from their surrounding environment, including their own families. Along with the development of the times, a new generation of parents from Generation Z has emerged, bringing a different parenting style, filled with both opportunities and challenges in supporting their children, including those with special needs. Generation Z, having grown up in the digital era with rapid access to information, possesses unique characteristics in parenting; however, they still encounter difficulties in emotional maturity and decision-making. This study aims to explore in depth the roles, challenges, and strategies adopted by Generation Z parents in Tanjung Siram Village in raising children with special needs. Using a qualitative approach with a phenomenological study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations of the daily parenting patterns. The findings reveal that although Gen Z parents demonstrate openness and adaptability through the use of digital media, they continue to struggle with emotional management and maintaining consistency in parenting. Support from technology, online communities, and modern parenting approaches serves as a major strength; however, additional educational programs are still needed to strengthen their competencies. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of parenting children with special needs in the digital era while emphasizing the importance of intergenerational collaboration in building sustainable support systems, especially considering that many areas, including Tanjung Siram Village, still lack the establishment of Special Education Schools (SLB). Furthermore, this research is also directed toward the attention of local government authorities, urging them to become more aware of the conditions faced by children with disabilities, so that they can receive an education equal to that of other children without disabilities.

**Keywords:** Generation Z, Children with Special Needs, Parenting, Special Education Schools, Parental Role, Tanjung Siram Village, Digital Era

## **INTRODUCTION**

Children with special needs (ABK) are a group that needs attention, treatment, and special educational services that are tailored to their individual needs (Sutjihati, 2015). Until now, children with special needs in various regions, including in Tanjung Siram Village, Bilah Hulu District, still face significant challenges, such as social discrimination, limited access to education, and lack of support from the surrounding environment, including their own families (Sunardi, 2011). This condition is exacerbated by the uneven establishment of Special Schools (SLB) in remote areas, which causes the educational rights of children with disabilities to not be fulfilled optimally.

Among the various special needs that exist, children with speech impairments (speech disorders) and visually impaired (behavioral and emotional disorders) are often marginalized groups. Children with disabilities experience difficulties in verbal communication, which has an impact on their social and academic abilities. Meanwhile, talaras children show behavior that is not in accordance with general social norms, so they often get negative stigma from society (Abdurrahman, 2003). Both types of disabilities require a more patient, structured and positive parenting approach so that they can thrive optimally in their environment.

As the times develop, Generation Z, which is a generation born in the range of 1995-2012, emerges as a new generation of parents who have unique characteristics in parenting styles (Prenky, 2001). This generation grows up in the digital era with fast access to information, is adaptive to technology, and has a more open view of diversity, including children with special needs. But on the other hand, they also face challenges in terms of emotional independence, stability in decision-making, and consistency in implementing parenting patterns (Seemiller & Gracde, 2016).

Parenting for children with special needs in the digital era brings new dynamics, where the use of technology is an important part of supporting children's development. Generation Z parents can take advantage of information from online communities, as well as special educational applications for children with special needs (Livingstone & Helsper, 2007). It must be so, a more structured effort is needed to improve their parenting competence so that they do not only rely on technology, but also strengthen the emotional and social aspects in accompanying children, especially children with visual impairments and visually impaired who need deeper emotional involvement.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine in depth how the role of Gen Z as parents in caring for children with special needs in Tanjung Siram Village, Bilah Hulu District, Labuhan Batu Regency. This research also encourages the awareness of local governments to pay more attention to the fulfillment of the educational rights of children with special needs, so that they get equal learning opportunities with other children and do not forget religious teachings that include parental parenting in the care of children, especially children with special needs.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of phenomenological study research. This approach was chosen to delve deeply into the experiences, roles, challenges, and parenting strategies undertaken by parents from Gen Z in raising children with special needs in Tanjung Siram Village, Bilah Hulu District, Labuhan Batu Regency. The subjects of this study are 2 Generation Z parents who have children with special needs. The first child is a person with a speech impairment, while the second child is a person with a speech impairment as well as a hearing impairment. The selection of samples was carried out by purposive sampling technique, which is to select informants based on special criteria that are in accordance with the research objectives, namely Generation Z parents who are active in parenting children with special needs.

The data collection technique was carried out through the first, an in-depth interview with both parents to explore their experiences, challenges and parenting

strategies on a daily basis. Second, participatory observation of parenting interactions between parents and children, in order to enrich descriptive data and confirm the results of interviews. The research instrument is in the form of a semi-structured interview guideline that contains a list of open-ended questions, so as to allow the development of advanced questions according to the dynamics of the interview. The data analysis technique is carried out using the Miles and Huberman model which involves data reduction, which is the process of summarizing, selecting and focusing relevant data. Data presentation in the form of a descriptive narrative. Finally, drawing conclusions and verifying to derive meaning from the data that has been collected.

To ensure the validity of the data, this study applied triangulation techniques, both source triangulation (comparing data from interviews and observations) and triangulation techniques (using more than one data collection technique). With this method, it is hoped that a complete picture of the role of Generation Z parents in the care of children with special needs will be obtained, especially in the case of visually impaired and visually impaired children in Tanjung Siaram Village.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study aims to explore the role of Generation Z as parents in the care of children with special needs (ABK) in Tanjung Siram Village, Bilah Hulu District, Labuhan Batu Regency. Data obtained through in-depth interviews and observations show that parents from Generation Z have openness to technology and information, but still face major challenges in managing emotions and parenting consistency.

Based on an interview with Siti Siregar's mother, a visually impaired crew member who is now 26 years old, it is known that since the age of two Siti has shown signs of difficulty speaking due to the condition of short tongue (ankyloglossia) and excessive saliva production. Despite having verbal limitations, Siti is known as a cheerful child and is able to interact socially with the full support of her mother. The parenting that is carried out is more based on affection, acceptance, and the use of visual media such as picture story books, Emotional Flashcards and activities to support daily communication.

Meanwhile, Mr. Muller Harahap, the parent of Andini, a 16-year-old crew member with a combination of speech and speech impairment, said that since the age of one, Andini has shown symptoms of aggressive behavior and speech difficulties. Parenting involves emotional control strategies, consistent approaches, and regular consultations with health workers to optimize the development of their behavior and communication.

When compared to previous research, as explained by Seemiller & Grace (2016), Generation Z is indeed known to be adaptive to technological changes but has challenges in terms of emotional maturity. This is consistent with the findings of this study, where parents show information seeking skills but still have difficulty in the aspect of controlling emotions. Sunardi's research (2011) also stated that the biggest challenge in raising children in the regions is limited access to education and lack of social support. This is

strengthened by the findings in Tanjung Siram Village, where there is still no Special School (SLB) that can accommodate the educational needs of children with disabilities.

In contrast to previous research by Abdurrahman (2003) which highlighted the importance of institution-based intensive therapy for visually impaired and speech-impaired children, this study found that family emotional support and an online community-based approach can be a new force that is quite effective in supporting children with disabilities, especially in the context of rural communities with limited facilities. Further interpretation, this study shows that in a local context such as Tanjung Siram Village, the openness and adaptation of technology owned by Generation Z parents is an important capital to fill the void of formal services. However, this parenting approach must be strengthened with emotional training and parenting education based on the needs of ABK.

Thus, this study modifies the theory of Generation Z parenting in the context of children with special needs by adding the factors of "local community support" and "adaptation to the limitations of formal services" as important variables in the success of parenting in the region.

In the context of caring for children with special needs in Tanjung Siram Village, the role of Generation Z as parents shows new patterns that are important to observe. Based on the results of the interview, it can be seen that although both parents, both Mrs. Siti Siregar and Mr. Muller Harahap, have a fairly good level of digital literacy in seeking information about their children's needs, they still face limitations in the implementation of special needs-based parenting strategies.

This finding reinforces the opinion of Seemiller and Grace (2016) that Generation Z relies on technology to solve life's problems, including parenting, but at the same time, they need stronger emotional debriefing and interpersonal maturity. In a study by Livingstone and Helsper (2007), it was stated that the younger generation of digital users are fast in accessing information, but often have gaps in the application of this knowledge in real situations.

The results of observations on the interaction between parents and children also show that emotional support from the family has a very large role in improving children's social skills. Siti, despite being speechless, still shows a cheerful and adaptive attitude towards her environment thanks to her attentive upbringing. This is in line with Sutjihati's (2015) research which emphasizes that children with special needs who receive consistent affection and social support, will show more positive development in their adaptive skills.

However, Andini's condition shows a higher complexity due to the combination of hearing impairment and hearing impairment. In these cases, a more systematic, therapy-based approach to parenting is required. This corroborates the findings of Abdurrahman (2003) who stated that children with autism need a structured behavioral therapy approach to help them adapt.

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Fifth, Collaboration with communities and NGOs, namely by collaborating with local communities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) engaged in the field of disability to accelerate the provision of quality education services in rural areas (Handayani, 2017).

In the context of Tanjung Siram Village, the implementation of the above strategic measures is very urgent considering that there are children with disabilities such as Siti

(the visually impaired) and Andini (the visually impaired and visually impaired) who have not yet received access to special education that suits their needs. A complete dependence on family nurturing, in the absence of formal support from educational institutions, slows down the development of the children's potential to the maximum.

If not addressed immediately, children with special needs in rural areas are at risk of double marginalization: both socially and educationally. This is in line with the study of Booth and Ainscow (2002), which emphasized that the existence of adequate special education services is the main key to creating an inclusive society that is truly child-friendly, without discrimination.

The Qur'an's View of Children with Special Needs and Islamic Parenting In an Islamic perspective, children with special needs (ABK) are seen as part of the diversity created by Allah SWT. Not only should they be respected and treated with affection, but they also have equal rights to attention, education, and protection. The Qur'an teaches that every human being, regardless of his physical or mental condition, has an honor given directly by Allah SWT. As affirmed in His words:

لَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ

"And indeed, We have glorified the descendants of Adam..." (QS. Al-Isra' [17]: 70)

The interpretation of this verse according to Ibn Kathir (2003) shows that human dignity is universal, without discrimination on the basis of physical, mental, or social status. Children with disabilities remain within this sphere of glory. That is, treating them with respect, providing education, and fulfilling their rights are moral and religious commandments in Islam.

In addition, the Qur'an also emphasizes the importance of patience in facing life's trials, including in parenting children with special needs:

وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

"And give glad tidings to those who are patient." (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 155)

The interpretation of this verse (Al-Jalalain, 2005) teaches that the test of life's difficulties, including the test of raising a child with a disability, is a means to improve the status of human beings in the sight of Allah. Parents who are patient and sincere in educating children with special needs will get great rewards.

Islamic parenting for children with special needs emphasizes the principle of tarbiyah (education) that does not distinguish between affection, respect for dignity, and the development of children's potential. In Islam, parents are encouraged to love their children unconditionally, to see them as a trust from Allah, and to love them without shame, indifference, or discrimination, as the Prophet Muhammad PBUH said: "Not among our group, those who do not love little children..." (HR. Abu Dawud, no. 4943).

In addition, education should be provided according to the ability of children, with a learning method that takes into account their strengths and limitations, as stated in the Qur'an surah An-Nahl [16]: 125. Islam also encourages parents to cultivate confidence in

children with special needs, in line with the principle of "la yukallifullahu nafsan illa wus'aha", Allah does not burden a person but according to his ability (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 286).

Children with special needs need to be involved in social life, so as not to feel isolated, and must continue to be prayed and istighfared by parents, as the Prophet PBUH taught the importance of prayer for the good of children. Integration with the results of the study shows that from interviews with Siti and Andini's parents, it was found that emotional acceptance of the child's condition is quite good, but the limited understanding of the concept of Islamic parenting for children with special needs still needs to be improved. Parents rely more on parenting instincts without being supported by conceptual provisions based on religious values and the psychology of child development. This shows the importance of Islamic parenting education programs for Generation Z parents in rural areas such as Tanjung Siram Village, so that the care of children with special needs can be carried out not only based on natural affection, but also based on solid spiritual values.

In addition to the importance of the Islamic parenting approach to children with special needs (ABK), this discussion also emphasized that the government's attention is a vital factor in building an education and social support ecosystem in rural areas such as Tanjung Siram Village, Bilah Hulu District.

Based on the results of interviews with the parents of Siti Siregar and Muller Harahap, both of them revealed limitations in accessing special education services, because until now there are no Special Schools (SLB) available in their area. As a result, children like Siti and Andini do not get an education that suits their needs. This condition exacerbates the risk of delayed social, academic, and emotional development in ABK, as also explained in the research of Booth & Ainscow (2002) that limited access to education is directly proportional to the inhibition of social inclusion of children with special needs.

In line with that, UNICEF (2013) in its report *The State of the World's Children* also emphasized that in many remote areas of the world, children with disabilities face systemic discrimination and neglect, due to the lack of inclusive educational facilities.

In this context, local governments have a strategic role. First, the government needs to establish or facilitate the existence of SLB or inclusion education programs in each sub-district, especially in rural areas such as Bilah Hulu. Second, strengthening socialization about the rights of children with disabilities to the community is also important so that social stigma against children with disabilities can be suppressed.

Furthermore, collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and local communities can accelerate the realization of inclusive education, as mandated in Law No. 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities which states that every child with disabilities has the right to quality and accessible education.

As described in the verse of QS. Al-Isra' [17]: 70 that every human being is glorified by Allah regardless of his physical or mental condition, then discrimination against ABK is contrary to the principle of justice in Islam. Fair and inclusive treatment

of children with special needs is a manifestation of Allah's mandate to humans in maintaining humanity.

In parenting, Islam teaches the importance of patience, compassion, and empowerment for children with all their conditions. A child of ABK is not a burden, but a trust that brings blessings to the family, as emphasized in the Qur'an. Al-Baqarah [2]: 286 that Allah does not burden a person but according to his ability.

This study found that although Generation Z parents in Tanjung Siram Village showed openness in accepting their children's conditions, they still needed external support in the form of Islamic parenting training, access to health services, and access to proper education.

The results of this research also gave birth to a new finding (novelty) in the form of the concept of "Spirituality-Based Collaborative Parenting". This concept is an approach to parenting children with special needs that emphasizes the importance of synergy between parents, the government, and local communities in supporting children's growth and development. The basis of this collaboration is not only based on social or administrative principles, but also on Islamic spiritual values such as patience, justice, and compassion, which are the main foundations in the parenting process.

In addition, this concept encourages the use of digital technology as a means to expand the insight and capacity of parents in understanding the needs of children with special needs in a more adaptive and sustainable manner. Spirituality-Based Collaborative Parenting is a modification and development of traditional parenting theory and modern inclusive education theory, by enriching the approach through the integration of a strong spiritual foundation, resulting in parenting patterns that are more holistic, contextual, and relevant to socio-religious dynamics in rural communities.

## **KESIMPULAN**

This study reveals that the role of Generation Z as parents in the care of Children with Special Needs (ABK) in Tanjung Siram Village, Bilah Hulu District, is characterized by a digital-based adaptive pattern but still faces major challenges in terms of emotional maturity, parenting consistency, and access to special education services. The results of interviews with two ABK parents show that openness to the use of information technology is the strength of this generation, but the absence of Special Schools (SLB) in rural areas exacerbates the limitations of the development of children with disabilities such as the visually impaired and the visually impaired.

The main findings of this research resulted in a new concept, namely "Spirituality-Based Collaborative Parenting", which is a parenting model for children and women that integrates: Islamic values-based approaches (such as patience, justice, compassion), Active collaboration with local communities, local governments, and online communities, Utilization of digital technology as a source of parenting information and communication, and parental empowerment through religious value-based parenting training. This concept enriches traditional parenting theories and expands the inclusive



education framework by adding a dimension of spirituality in the parenting of children in the digital era.

Thus, this research not only answers the research objectives, but also makes a new contribution in the form of relevant parenting models to be applied in rural communities, especially in Indonesia.

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