

Policy Analysis of Inclusive Education in Madrasahs in East Java, Indonesia

A Maqāṣid Sharī'ah Perspective

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This study analyzes the implementation of inclusive education policies in Indonesian madrasahs by assessing policy effectiveness, challenges in practice, and the relevance of maqāṣid sharī'ah in developing a more inclusive and equitable education system. Employing a multiple case study approach, data were collected from three cities in East Java through 15 in-depth interviews, participatory observations, document analysis, and two Focus Group Discussion (FGD) sessions. The analysis was conducted manually using open, axial, and selective coding. The findings reveal that madrasahs adopt inclusive education based on national policies and Islamic values (hifẓ al-'aql and al-'adālah), yet they continue to face structural and social barriers. The main challenges include the lack of official recognition for Special Education Support Teachers (Guru Pendamping Khusus, GPK) within the national administrative system, limited training for regular teachers, and persistent social stigma against students with special needs. Curriculum adaptations remain unsystematic and largely depend on the internal policies of individual madrasahs.

This study contributes to the literature by integrating maqāṣid sharī'ah as an analytical framework for inclusive education policy, an area that has received limited

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scholarly attention. Policy reforms are necessary to formally recognize the role of GPK, enhance teacher training programs, and strengthen inclusive cultural practices within madrasahs. By combining Islamic values with a more systematic policy approach, madrasahs can become a progressive and equitable model for inclusive education within Indonesia's Islamic education system.

Keywords: *inclusive education, madrasah, maqāṣid shari'ah, education policy, Special Education Support Teachers (GPK).*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is a key component of transforming education systems to ensure that every individual, including students with special needs, obtains the right to quality education without discrimination (Ferguson, 2008; Miles & Singal, 2010). This agenda aligns with global policies such as Education for All (EFA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), yet implementation in various contexts still faces challenges in the areas of regulation, infrastructure readiness, teacher competence, and social acceptance (Ainscow & Viola, 2024; Vislie, 2003).

In Indonesia, a regulatory framework for inclusion is available through Law No. 8/2016 and Minister of National Education Regulation No. 70/2009 (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2009). Nevertheless, field practice remains sporadic and uneven, particularly in madrasahs. Official data underscore the disparity: more than 75% of children with disabilities have never received schooling (Kementerian Koordinator Pembangunan Manusia dan Kebudayaan, 2023). At the global/regional level, the UNESCO—GEM Report highlights persistent inclusion gaps, indicating a lag between commitment and implementation (UNESCO, 2020; 2023). In the context of madrasahs, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has issued the Director General of Islamic Education Decree No. 758/2022 as an official guideline for the implementation of inclusive education, indicating that policy adoption is being accelerated (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam, 2022). However, implementation at the school level remains gradual.

At a pedagogical level, recent evidence shows that inclusion anchored in the curriculum (curriculum-anchored inclusion) risks producing “partial inclusivity,” in which students simultaneously experience inclusion and exclusion in classroom texts and routines (Cohen, 2022). This condition helps explain why the gap between written policy and day-to-day learning

practice persists, especially in madrasahs that are strengthening teacher readiness and school culture for inclusion.

From an Islamic perspective, *maqāṣid shari'ah* can function as a conceptual framework that affirms education as a fundamental right through principles such as *hifẓ al-'aql* (preservation of intellect) (Wahyudi & Latif, 2023). Other studies affirm the alignment of inclusive education with the mandate to protect and fulfill the rights of persons with disabilities in national policy (Anshari, 2024). Thus, a strong normative footing is available, yet a to-do list remains at the implementation level.

Compared with local approaches, cross-country approaches offer valuable lessons. In Western Europe, Italy abolished special schools and fully integrated students with special needs (Vislie, 2003), whereas in the United States, advances in inclusion still confront segregation based on race and socioeconomic status (Ferguson, 2008). In Muslim-majority contexts, Malaysia mainstreams inclusive education in national policy and teacher training (Malaysia Education Blueprint, wave 2013–2025; 2023 performance update) (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013; 2023); Turkey links inclusion policy with religious schools/Imam Hatip as part of the country's religious education landscape (Şahin, 2019); and in Egypt, the legal framework of Law No. 10/2018 promotes equality of access, although implementation challenges remain prominent (Elhadi, 2021; Government of Egypt, 2018; Humanity & Inclusion, 2022a, 2022b, 2023; UNESCO, 2021). These findings affirm that the success of inclusion depends on strong policy synergy, teacher readiness, and support from the educational ecosystem.

Despite the availability of theological and regulatory support, the implementation of inclusion in madrasahs faces constraints: a fragmented curriculum (Wibowo, 2022) and a medical paradigm that positions disability as an individual limitation rather than a social barrier that can be addressed through reforms of the education system (Muttaqin et al., 2023). Another gap in the literature is that research on madrasahs in Indonesia remains limited and tends to be descriptive as most studies focus on general schools. Methodologically, many studies end at policy analysis and do not explore the experiences of key stakeholders. Therefore, this study adopts a qualitative multi-case study approach to understand more deeply the dynamics of inclusive policy implementation in madrasahs and their enabling and constraining factors.

The theoretical framework linking *maqāṣid shari'ah* with strategies for implementing inclusion in madrasahs remains underdeveloped. This study addresses that gap by formulating an analytical framework that bridges the

two and serves as a reference for policymakers in designing a more inclusive and just Islamic education system. Building on this conceptual–empirical gap, the following section presents the research questions, objectives, and significance of this study.

To achieve these objectives, the study seeks to answer the following key questions:

1. How is inclusive education implemented in *madrasahs* in Indonesia?
2. What are the key challenges in the implementation of inclusive education in *madrasahs*?
3. How can the principles of *maqāṣid shari'ah* be applied to support inclusive education in *madrasahs*?

This study aims to fill academic and policy gaps in inclusive education in *madrasahs* by developing an approach that integrates the principles of *maqāṣid shari'ah* as an analytical framework for implementation. This approach offers a new perspective that has not been widely explored in the inclusive education literature, particularly in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. In line with the clarification of scope, the findings are positioned as an indicative analysis grounded in analytical generalization (not nationally representative). Using a case-study approach focused on in-depth exploration, this research offers richer empirical insights and evidence-based policy recommendations for *madrasahs* to implement inclusive education.

Accordingly, this study not only contributes to the development of inclusive education theory within Islamic education but also provides a practical basis for the formulation of education policies that are more inclusive and just in Indonesia.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative method with a multiple case study approach (Yin, 2009) to explore in depth the implementation of inclusive education policies in *madrasahs*. The multiple case study approach was chosen as it enables comparisons between several *madrasahs* implementing inclusive policies, thereby identifying patterns, challenges, and broader strategies in inclusive education practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Additionally, this study examines how *maqāṣid shari'ah* can serve as a conceptual foundation for the development of inclusive education in *madrasahs*, particularly in relation to *hifẓ al-'aql* (preservation of intellect) and *al-'adālah* (justice) as fundamental principles for a more just and inclusive education system (Auda, 2008).

Although the study is situated in three East Javanese cities, the findings are intended as an indicative analysis of broader trends in Indonesia's madrasahs rather than a nationally representative account; accordingly, claims are framed as analytic generalizations (Yin, 2009) with attention to transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Participants and Data Sources

This research was conducted in three cities in East Java (Malang, Sidoarjo, and Surabaya) with a focus on madrasahs that have implemented inclusive education policies. Purposive sampling (Patton, 2015) was employed to select participants based on their involvement in the implementation of inclusive education. The number of participants was determined until data saturation was reached, meaning no new information emerged from interviews and observations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To support transferability rather than statistical representativeness, thick contextual descriptions of sites and cases are provided so readers can judge the applicability of insights to other Indonesian settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This sampling strategy aims to support transferability rather than statistical representativeness, consistent with the study's analytic generalization goals.

Data Collection Techniques

A variety of data collection methods were employed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of inclusive education implementation in madrasahs (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted manually using a systematic coding approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The initial stage of analysis involved open coding, where data from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were analyzed to identify key themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Once the main themes were identified, the process continued with axial coding, which aimed to connect data categories based on emerging patterns within the context of inclusive education policy implementation (Saldaña, 2021).

After analyzing the relationships between categories, the final stage was selective coding, which focused on synthesizing the main categories into a broader research narrative (Miles et al., 2014). In this stage, the

researcher developed an interpretation of the inclusive education policies implemented in madrasahs and how the emerging challenges and strategies could be linked to the concept of *maqāṣid shari’ah* (Auda, 2008).

Table 1. Data Collection Techniques

Method	Description
Documentation	Examines national regulations, madrasah policies, curricula, and teaching guidelines related to inclusive education (Bowen, 2009). Administrative data, academic reports, and learning modules were also analyzed to understand how inclusion is structurally implemented.
Participatory Observation	Conducted over three months with a frequency of twice a week in each madrasah. The observations were carried out directly by the researcher, focusing on teacher-student interactions involving students with special needs, inclusive teaching methods, and barriers encountered in policy implementation (Angrosino, 2007).
In-depth Interviews	A total of 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with madrasah principals, teachers, and inclusive education experts. Each interview lasted 60–90 minutes and was recorded (with participant consent) to ensure analytical accuracy (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).
Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	Two focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with teachers from various madrasahs to evaluate challenges in the implementation of inclusive education and to collaboratively formulate practical solutions, following standard FGD protocols (Krueger & Casey, 2014). In addition, we conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with madrasah principals, classroom teachers, Special Education Support Teachers (Guru Pendamping Khusus, GPK), and inclusive education experts. Patterns emerging from the interviews, FGDs, and classroom observations were iteratively compared to validate and enrich the findings. We assessed that thematic saturation had been reached—that is, no new substantive codes or dimensions emerged in successive interviews—by the time the 15 interviews were completed. The study’s credibility and reliability were enhanced through triangulation, member checking (participant confirmation), and an audit trail (audit trail).

To enhance the reliability of the analysis, the coded data were independently reviewed by another researcher as a cross-checking measure, ensuring that interpretations remained consistent and unbiased (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Additionally, the analysis process was conducted reflectively,

considering the social and cultural contexts of madrasahs, thereby ensuring that the research findings were valid and contextually relevant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data Validity and Credibility

To ensure the validity and credibility of data, this study applied source and methodological triangulation strategies (Denzin, 2012). Source triangulation was carried out by comparing data obtained from interviews with madrasah principals, teachers, and inclusive education experts, while methodological triangulation was implemented by combining interviews, observations, document analysis, and FGD (Patton, 2015).

In addition to triangulation, this study also employed member checking, where analyzed interview results were reconfirmed with participants to ensure that the researcher's interpretation accurately reflected their intended meaning and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). If discrepancies or inaccuracies were found in the interpretation, the data were revised to better align with actual realities (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

The entire research process was systematically documented through an audit trail, which recorded every stage of the study, from data collection to final analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This documentation ensures research transparency, allowing all methodological steps to be traced and reviewed if necessary (Krueger & Casey, 2014). With this approach, the credibility of the study is further strengthened, ensuring that the results are reliable and applicable to academic discourse and the implementation of inclusive education policies.

Finally, when referring to "Indonesia" as the study scope, we do so as an analytic frame informed by multi-site evidence from East Java; we do not claim statistical generalizability to all Indonesian madrasahs.

RESULTS

Implementation of Inclusive Education in Madrasahs: Synergy Between Government Policies and Maqāṣid Sharī'ah

Inclusive education in *madrasahs* represents the realization of the right to education for all children, including students with special needs. In East Java, inclusive education is regulated under Governor Regulation No. 30/2018. However, in its implementation, *madrasahs* face various challenges, one of which is the recognition of Special Education Support Teachers (Guru Pendamping Khusus, GPK), who have not yet been fully accommodated in the national education database (DAPODIK).

A teacher highlighted this challenge:

In practice, the government has not granted GPKs access to be included in the DAPODIK database. We are often registered as subject teachers, guidance counselors, or homeroom teachers. This is one of the shortcomings of government policy. (G-S-03-W)

This administrative disorder results in GPKs lacking formal status as inclusive education personnel, leading to unclear rights and welfare. Nevertheless, *madrasahs* continue to take the initiative in implementing inclusive education based on *maqāṣid shari'ah*, particularly in the aspects of *hifz al-'aql* (preservation of intellect) and *al-'adālah* (justice).

Within the framework of *maqāṣid shari'ah*, we treat *al-'adālah* (justice) as a fundamental value (*al-qiyām al-asāsiyyah*) that underpins the general objectives (*maqāṣid 'āmmah*). In this study, *al-'adālah* functions both as a normative value guiding policy interpretation and as an operational principle to ensure fairness in educational access; accordingly, inclusive education is understood as a means to prevent marginalization and guarantee equitable opportunities for students with disabilities and special needs.

A *madrasah* principal explained how inclusive education in *madrasahs* is rooted in Islamic teachings:

The first thing we do is build a culture and understanding of religious values regarding inclusive education. This aims to ensure that teachers and parents understand the essence of inclusive education. Establishing an inclusive education culture in madrasahs is a collective effort based on Islamic teachings of rahmatan lil 'alamin and, of course, maqāṣid shari'ah. We believe that in Islamic teachings, seeking knowledge is not only a right but an obligation for every individual. (KM-M-02-W)

This statement shows that *madrasahs* are not only following government policies but also building an inclusive education system based on Islamic values.

Follow-up interview evidence confirms this normative foundation. A teacher refers to the story of 'Abdullāh ibn Umm Maktūm—whose encounter with the Prophet prompted the revelation of Sūrat 'Abasa—to emphasize human equality (*al-musāwāh*) and justice (*al-'adālah*) and to inspire inclusive practice in the *madrasah*:

The story of 'Abdullāh ibn Umm Maktūm—a companion of the Prophet Muhammad who was blind from birth and whose encounter prompted the revelation of Sūrat 'Abasa—affirms human equality (al-musāwāh) and justice (al-'adālah) before God and teaches the importance of concern for persons with disabilities. This story becomes an inspiration for me to cultivate inclusive education by providing equal opportunities for every individual to contribute and to develop their potential. (G-M-09-W)

Another teacher explicitly refers to Qur'anic teachings—such as al-Tin (4), al-Hujurat (13), and al-Isra' (70)—as a moral impetus to advance justice and equality of access to knowledge; these principles are routinely communicated to parents and the madrasah community to respond to negative attitudes toward disability:

Teachings in the Qur'an—such as al-Tin (4), al-Hujurat (13), and al-Isra' (70)—shape my awareness of the importance of inclusive education in the madrasah. These principles motivate me to serve as an inclusive education teacher. At every meeting with students' parents, I share Islamic principles of justice and equality in seeking knowledge with the madrasah community to respond to limited awareness and negative attitudes toward disability among educators, parents, and the wider society. (G-S-10-W)

At the same time, an inclusive-education expert observes that although some madrasahs in East Java have begun improving accessibility, these efforts remain inconsistent or unfinished, indicating a gap between policy intent and implementation; the expert recommends raising awareness and providing training for staff and students to cultivate a more inclusive culture:

In the present context, some madrasahs in East Java have taken steps toward accessibility, but these efforts are often inconsistent or incomplete. There remains a gap between policy intentions and actual implementation regarding accessibility standards. Nevertheless, I believe that—grounded in Islamic teachings—awareness-raising and training programs for staff and students can cultivate a more inclusive madrasah culture. (E-S-01-W)

From the administrative and infrastructure side, a madrasah principal urges prioritizing the improvement and maintenance of accessible facilities, as well as the formulation and enforcement of a comprehensive accessibility policy, aligned with maqāṣid syarī'ah to ensure equal opportunity and participation:

In terms of facilities, the madrasah needs to prioritize the improvement and maintenance of accessible infrastructure. In other words, the madrasah needs to formulate a comprehensive accessibility policy and ensure its enforcement. There is still much work to be done to make the madrasah truly physically accessible to all students. Therefore, mainstreaming the principles of maqāṣid syarī'ah is crucial for building an inclusive educational environment that supports equal opportunities and participation. (KM-M-06-W)

In line with the dimension of *hifẓ al-'aql* within the maqāṣid, a teacher emphasizes that education protects and develops the intellect for all—including students with disabilities—thus requiring inclusive provision:

Preservation of Intellect (hifẓ al-'aql): education is a means to protect and develop the intellect. Maqāṣid syarī'ah encourages the provision of knowledge to all members of society, including persons with disabilities, to ensure their intellectual growth and participation in community life. (G-SB-11-W)

Overall, these findings link normative commitments (*al-musāwāh*, *al-'adālah*—specified here as a fundamental value underpinning the *maqāṣid 'āmmah*—and *ḥifẓ al-'aql*) with concrete policy and infrastructure needs, suggesting that a *maqāṣid*-based orientation can drive compliance and accessibility reforms.

Inclusive Learning Practices in Madrasahs: Curriculum Adaptation and Learning Models

In practice, *madrasahs* implement inclusive education by adapting curricula and teaching methods to accommodate students with special needs. A teacher at a *madrasah* stated that academic standards must be flexible:

The policies set in the madrasah align with existing regulations, but academic standards related to subject matter will be adjusted to meet students' needs. (G-SB-07-W)

Madrasahs apply two main approaches in their inclusive learning system:

1. Regular class with support, where inclusive students learn alongside regular students with the assistance of a GPK.
2. A special class or inclusive learning space that supports inclusive students who experience difficulties in regular classes.

A teacher confirmed the flexibility of this approach:

The policy in the madrasah follows government regulations, inclusive students attend regular classes, but if they face difficulties in learning, they will be transferred to an inclusive class. (G-S-05-W)

Additionally, *madrasahs* implement Individualized Enrichment Programs (Program Pengayaan Individu, PPI) to ensure that each inclusive student receives support according to their needs.

Complementing these instructional adaptations, the informants emphasized that sustained awareness-raising and structured training for both staff and students are required to instill an inclusive culture within learning routines, thereby narrowing the gap between written policy and day-to-day classroom practice:

In the present context, some madrasahs in East Java have taken steps toward accessibility, but these efforts are often inconsistent or incomplete. There remains a gap between policy intentions and actual implementation regarding accessibility standards. Nevertheless, I believe that—grounded in Islamic teachings—awareness-raising and training programs for staff and students can cultivate a more inclusive madrasah culture. (E-S-01-W)

This pattern indicates that curricular flexibility (Program Pengayaan Individu, PPI; adaptive placement) needs to be combined with systematic

capacity strengthening so that policy is translated into daily pedagogical practice.

The Role of Special Education Support Teachers (GPK): Between Moral Responsibility and Social Challenges

The role of GPKs in supporting inclusive education is crucial, particularly in helping students with special needs adapt socially. One GPK expressed pride in the inclusive education policy:

I am pleased with the new policies on inclusive education, as they allow children to learn and engage with their social environment. In the past, many children with special needs were neglected and felt incapable of learning. With the government's support recognizing that all children have the right to proper education, I, as a GPK, feel proud. (G-M-05-W)

However, in practice, GPKs face several social challenges, especially the lack of acceptance from some regular teachers and students. A GPK stated:

At our madrasah, we receive full support from the principal, including training for GPKs and student participation in extracurricular activities. However, some regular teachers still underestimate inclusive students in class. Regular students mock inclusive students, and some teachers or staff say things like: 'That's your problem, student.' This makes me disappointed because we should all be responsible. (G-S-08-W)

This challenge shows that changing attitudes and culture in *madrasahs* remains a work in progress in implementing inclusive education.

Additional interview data also identify three operational constraints that affect the effectiveness of GPK in inclusive madrasahs: (1) teacher status—administratively, some GPK are not yet registered as teachers of inclusive schools; (2) facilities that are not yet adequate; and (3) limited opportunities to participate in professional development compared to general schools. Nevertheless, the teachers argue that Islamic values (*al-'adālah*, *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *ḥifẓ al-'aql*) can strengthen the implementation of inclusive schools: “Although the implementation of inclusive schools in madrasahs faces challenges—(1) teacher status; administratively not yet registered as teachers of inclusive schools; (2) lack of facilities; and (3) limited participation in training compared to general schools—Islamic values (*al-'adālah*, *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *ḥifẓ al-'aql*) can support the implementation of inclusive schools” (G-M-12-W).

Although social acceptance and resources are not yet evenly distributed, the moral significance of the *maqāṣid* (*al-'adālah*, *ḥifẓ al-dīn*, *ḥifẓ al-'aql*) provides a shared rationality to underpin GPK advocacy and institutional change.

Summary of Research Findings in a Table

Table 2. Summary of Research Findings

Category	Key Findings	Supporting Data
Implementation of Inclusive Education Policy	Madrasahs implement inclusive education in line with national policy and the values of <i>maqāṣid shariʿah</i> . Specifically, <i>al-musāwāh</i> (equality), <i>al-ʿadālah</i> (justice), and <i>ḥifẓ al-ʿaql</i> (preservation of intellect) guide policy implementation and accessibility priorities.	(KM-M-02-W; G-M-09-W; G-S-10-W; E-S-01-W; KM-M-06-W; G-SB-11-W).
Curricular Adaptations and Learning Models	Two inclusive learning models are implemented: regular classes with support and special classes. Madrasahs also implement the Individualized Enrichment Program (Program <i>Pengayaan Individu</i> , PPI) and require sustained awareness-raising and structured training to instill an inclusive culture.	(G-S-05-W; G-SB-07-W) for placement & flexibility; PPI explicitly mentioned; (E-S-01-W) for the need for capacity strengthening.
Implementation Challenges	Key challenges include the recognition of GPK in DAPODIK, social stigma, and resource constraints. Additional constraints include accessibility that is inconsistent/incomplete, gaps between policy intent and implementation, and limited opportunities for professional development.	DAPODIK → (G-S-03-W); accessibility & training → (E-S-01-W; KM-M-06-W); operational constraints for GPK → (G-M-12-W).
Role of Special Education Support Teachers (GPK)	GPK plays a crucial role yet faces administrative barriers and a lack of support from some regular teachers. A <i>maqāṣid</i> -based rationality (<i>al-ʿadālah</i> , <i>ḥifẓ al-dīn</i> , <i>ḥifẓ al-ʿaql</i>) underpins GPK advocacy and culture-change efforts.	GPK support/pride (G-M-05-W), social barriers (G-S-08-W), operational constraints (G-M-12-W).

DISCUSSION

Implementation of Inclusive Education in *Madrasahs*: Synergy Between Policies, Structural Challenges, and *Maqāṣid Shariʿah*

Inclusive education has become a global agenda, emphasizing that every individual, including students with special needs (*Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus*—ABK), has equal rights to access quality education without discrimination (Ferguson, 2008; Miles & Singal, 2010). Inclusive education

policies have been adopted in various national regulations in Indonesia, including Law No. 8/2016 on Persons with Disabilities and Ministerial Regulation No. 70/2009 on Inclusive Education. However, the findings of this study indicate that the implementation of inclusive education in *madrasahs* still faces several structural challenges, particularly in the formal recognition of Special Education Support Teachers (Guru Pendamping Khusus, GPK) and the application of an adaptive curriculum.

As one informant stated, GPKs are not yet fully recognized in the national education database (DAPODIK), resulting in unclear employment status within the national education administration system. This issue affects their welfare and rights as inclusive education personnel (G-S-03-W). The gap between policy and implementation is also evident in a study highlighting that the concept of inclusive education within the *Merdeka Belajar* (Freedom to Learn) policy has not yet been systematically implemented in madrasahs (Suriaman, 2023; Rofiah et al., 2023).

From an Islamic perspective, *madrasahs* have both moral and spiritual responsibilities to ensure educational access for all students. The values of *maqāṣid shari'ah*, particularly *hifz al-'aql* (preservation of intellect) and *al-'adālah* (justice), serve as the foundation for developing an inclusive education system (Wahyudi & Latif, 2023). A *madrasah* principal emphasized that the implementation of inclusive education should be based on the values of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, ensuring that inclusion is not only dependent on government policies but also oriented toward social justice in Islam (KM-M-02-W).

However, compared to other countries such as Malaysia and Turkey, which have implemented more systematic approaches to inclusive education, *madrasahs* in Indonesia continue to face challenges related to infrastructure, teacher training, and social acceptance of students with special needs (Ainscow & Viola, 2024). A study revealed that some countries in Western Europe have eliminated special education schools and fully integrated students with special needs into regular schools (Vislie, 2003). In contrast, Indonesia's approach still tends to separate inclusive students into special learning spaces or limit their access within the regular education system.

From the perspective of *maqāṣid shari'ah*, the principle of *hifz al-'aql* underscores the fundamental right to education, meaning that inclusive policies must ensure full access for students with special needs. Additionally, the principle of *al-'adālah* demands a fair distribution of educational resources, indicating that the formal recognition of GPKs and capacity

building for regular teachers are urgent needs. Therefore, *maqāṣid shari'ah* serves not only as a conceptual foundation but also as a policy framework that promotes fairness and prioritizes the rights of inclusive students.

Curriculum Adaptation and Learning Models: Between Flexibility and Structural Barriers

The study findings indicate that *madrasahs* apply two main approaches in their inclusive education system:

1. Regular class with support, where inclusive students learn alongside regular students with the assistance of a GPK.
2. A special class or inclusive learning space, which is designed to help students who face difficulties in regular classrooms.

Although these approaches aim to provide flexibility, not all *madrasahs* have curricular systems that can effectively accommodate the individual needs of inclusive students. One teacher highlighted that academic standards must be flexible and adjusted to students' capabilities, yet national policies have not provided clear guidelines on how curricula should be optimally modified (G-SB-07-W).

Comparisons with other countries show that Malaysia has developed a more comprehensive inclusive education system, with well-defined curriculum adaptations and intensive training for educators (Muttaqin et al., 2023). Meanwhile, a study in the United States highlights that although inclusion rates have increased, segregation based on socioeconomic status and racial background persists (Ferguson, 2008). These findings indicate that while the challenges differ, the implementation of inclusive education in various countries still requires a systematic approach with well-structured policies.

In the *madrasah* context, a more flexible and *maqāṣid shari'ah*-based curriculum adaptation can serve as a solution to enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education. The implementation of individualized learning models, such as the Individualized Enrichment Program (Program Pengayaan Individu, PPI), can help students with special needs access to learning that aligns with their potential.

The Role of Special Education Support Teachers (GPK): Between Dedication and Social Challenges

The role of Special Education Support Teachers (GPK) is crucial in ensuring the success of inclusive education in *madrasahs*. GPKs are not only responsible for assisting students with special needs in learning but also

play a vital role in fostering an inclusive social environment. One GPK stated that the presence of inclusive education policies has significantly enhanced students with special needs' confidence in interacting with their social surroundings (G-M-05-W).

However, in practice, social stigma against students with special needs remains a challenge. One GPK highlighted that some regular teachers still hold negative attitudes toward inclusive students, even perceiving them as a "burden" in the classroom (G-S-08-W). The study also revealed that one of the primary obstacles to inclusive education in madrasahs is the lack of awareness and training among regular teachers in handling students with special needs (Wibowo, 2022).

Compared to countries such as Turkey, where inclusive education training has been integrated into teacher education curricula, Indonesia still needs to strengthen teacher training programs to ensure broader awareness of inclusivity within the *madrasah* environment (Ainscow & Viola, 2024).

Research Implications: Policy Strengthening and Transforming Inclusive Education in Madrasahs

The findings of this study have several significant implications for strengthening inclusive education policies and practices in *madrasahs*. (1) Formal recognition of Special Education Support Teachers (GPK) is a crucial issue that needs to be addressed in the national education system. Currently, GPKs lack a clear administrative status in the national education database (DAPODIK), which affects their job security and welfare. Without stronger regulations, the role of GPKs in supporting inclusive education cannot be fully optimized. Therefore, stronger policies are required to provide legitimacy to their role as inclusive education personnel in *madrasahs*.

Besides policy reinforcement, (2) enhancing teacher capacity is a key factor in the successful implementation of inclusive education. There are still gaps in regular teachers' skills in supporting students with special needs. Many teachers have not received adequate training in implementing inclusive teaching methods. Thus, a more systematic training program is needed, including training in differentiated pedagogy, inclusive education psychology, and inclusive classroom management strategies to ensure effective learning for all students.

From a social perspective, (3) cultural change within *madrasahs* remains a challenge that must be addressed. The findings of this study indicate that stigma against students with special needs persists, both among teachers and students. In many cases, inclusive students continue to experience

discrimination in social interactions within *madrasahs*. Therefore, greater efforts in socialization and education about the importance of inclusive education need to be reinforced. Community-based programs involving parents, teachers, and students can be an effective way to build broader awareness of inclusivity.

From an Islamic perspective, (4) integrating *maqāṣid shari'ah* into inclusive education policies can strengthen the *madrasah* education system. Islamic education emphasizes the principles of *hifz al-'aql* (preservation of intellect) and *al-'adālah* (justice), which affirm that every individual has the same right to acquire knowledge. By adopting a *maqāṣid shari'ah*-based approach, *madrasahs* can develop an education system that is not only aligned with national policies but also rooted in Islamic values, emphasizing inclusivity and justice for all students.

Research Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this study provides in-depth insights into the implementation of inclusive education in *madrasahs*, several limitations need to be considered. (1) The geographical scope of this study is limited to *madrasahs* in East Java, meaning that the findings cannot yet be fully generalized to other regions in Indonesia. Since the conditions of inclusive education may vary across regions, future research should expand its geographical coverage to include *madrasahs* from various provinces to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

Aside from geographical limitations, (2) this study employs a qualitative case study approach, which provides an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of inclusive education implementation. However, this approach has limitations in offering quantitative data on the effectiveness of implemented policies. To complement the findings of this study, future research could adopt quantitative methods, such as surveys or experiments, to measure the impact of inclusive education on the academic achievement and social development of students with special needs.

From a methodological perspective, (3) this study has not examined the long-term effectiveness of inclusive education policies in *madrasahs*. Therefore, longitudinal studies could serve as a promising future research direction. Such studies could observe how inclusive policies evolve and how factors such as teacher training, curriculum adaptation, and social acceptance of inclusive students change over the long term.

Additionally, (4) comparative studies with other countries could play a crucial role in developing inclusive education systems in *madrasahs*. Some

countries, such as Malaysia and Turkey, have developed inclusive education models in *madrasahs* with clearer regulations and stronger policy support. Future studies could explore how inclusive education approaches in other Muslim-majority countries can be adapted to the context of *madrasahs* in Indonesia. Comparisons of policies, curricula, and teacher training systems could provide broader insights into designing a more effective and sustainable inclusive education strategy.

Overall, this study reaffirms that the implementation of inclusive education in *madrasahs* still faces challenges, particularly in regulatory aspects, teacher preparedness, and social acceptance. However, with policy reinforcement, teacher capacity enhancement, and a more inclusive cultural transformation, *madrasahs* can become educational institutions that are more responsive to the needs of all students. Furthermore, a *maqāṣid shari'ah*-based approach offers a conceptual framework that can serve as a foundation for establishing a more just and equitable education system. With further research and improvements in policy implementation, inclusive education in *madrasahs* has the potential to develop into a progressive and inclusive educational model within the context of Islamic education and national education policy.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the implementation of inclusive education in *madrasahs* in Indonesia still faces structural, administrative, and social challenges, despite having a strong regulatory foundation. One of the main obstacles is the lack of accommodation for Special Education Support Teachers (GPK) in the national administrative system (DAPODIK), which affects their formal recognition and welfare. Additionally, curriculum adaptation and inclusive teaching methods lack standardized guidelines, making implementation highly dependent on individual *madrasah* initiatives. Socially, stigma against students with special needs persists among both teachers and regular students, hindering efforts to create a truly inclusive learning environment.

Theoretically, this study offers an original contribution by integrating *maqāṣid shari'ah* into the policy analysis of inclusive education in *madrasahs*—an approach that has not been widely explored in international literature. This framework highlights the importance of *hifz al-'aql* (preservation of intellect) and *al-'adālah* (justice) as foundational principles in establishing an inclusive and equitable Islamic education system. Thus,

this study contributes not only to the field of inclusive education but also expands the understanding of *maqāṣid shari'ah* implementation within the context of modern education.

From a policy and practice perspective, these findings emphasize that inclusive education policy reforms must include the official recognition of GPKs within the national education system. Without clear administrative status, the role of GPKs in supporting inclusive education will remain hindered. Additionally, training for regular teachers in inclusive teaching strategies should be made mandatory rather than a voluntary program to ensure all educators have equal competency in addressing students with special needs. *Madrasahs* should also adopt a community-based approach, involving parents and society in fostering an inclusive culture, considering that social stigma remains a major challenge.

However, this study has several limitations. First, its scope is limited to *madrasahs* in East Java, so the findings cannot yet be generalised nationwide. Second, the qualitative research approach provides in-depth insights but does not offer quantitative data on the impact of inclusive education on students' academic performance and social development. To complement these findings, future research could employ quantitative methods, such as survey-based or experimental approaches. Additionally, longitudinal studies are needed to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of inclusive education policies in *madrasahs*.

Overall, this study affirms that *madrasahs* have great potential to become models of Islamic-based inclusive education, but policy reforms, educator capacity building, and cultural transformation within schools remain needed. With stronger regulatory frameworks, enhanced teacher competencies, and the implementation of a *maqāṣid shari'ah*-based approach, *madrasahs* can evolve into progressive, inclusive, and equitable educational institutions that align with both Islamic education principles and national education policies.

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