Developing Information Literacy Models for Special Needs Students: A Case Study in Bengkulu, Indonesia

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Notes	ABSTRACT
  How to cite: Samosir, F. T., Ginting, R. T., & Ivone, B. L. (2024). Developing Information Literacy Models for Special Needs Students: A Case Study in Bengkulu, Indonesia. Khizanah Al-Hikmah : Jurnal Ilmu Perpustakaan, Informasi, Dan Kearsipan, 12(2). Retrieved from https://journal.uin-alauddin.ac.id/index.php/khizanah-al-hikmah/article/view/45947 DOI: 10.24252/kah.v12i2a4 	Information literacy is a critical skill for all students, including those with disabilities, to access and utilize knowledge effectively. This study explored the information literacy practices of students with disabilities and developed a tailored information literacy model to address their unique needs. Conducted at the State Special School of 1 Bengkulu, Indonesia (Sekolah Luar Biasa Negeri 1 Bengkulu), this research employs a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis, with participants including students with disabilities and their educators. The study revealed that students heavily rely on teachers for accessing information, utilizing sources such as books, libraries, the internet, and museums. However, their information literacy skills remain underdeveloped due to challenges associated with their disabilities. Based on these findings, the study proposed a model designed to enhance information literacy by guiding students in identifying, searching, evaluating, and effectively using information. This model aims to foster greater independence and adaptability in accessing and processing information, contributing to equitable education outcomes for students with disabilities. **Keywords:** Information for special needs; information literacy; information management

1. INTRODUCTION

Information literacy is essential for both public and special education settings. Every child is entitled to access accurate and relevant information to enhance their knowledge in these contexts. A key approach to fostering information literacy involves incorporating it into academic curricula or program evaluations, ensuring effective implementation through targeted training initiatives.

In Indonesia, information literacy for children with disabilities has not received sufficient attention or prioritization from the government. Therefore, it is crucial to implement programs aimed at enhancing the literacy skills of school-aged children with disabilities, as they too require access to information to support their learning processes and knowledge acquisition. In that sense, inclusive education is essential so children with special needs do not get discrimination. Still, in shaping education, it is necessary to have supportive environmental conditions against all other discrimination (Chidiadi Onwubiko, 2024).

In the context of facilities and infrastructure, the presence of a library for children with special needs is important. Libraries need to be made into integrated libraries for inclusive children. For example, libraries provide access to information not only for general education children but also for children with special needs. Students without special needs can support peers with special needs by using information effectively. It will emphasize the importance of educating all students to foster equal participation in school. The successful implementation of inclusive education for children with special needs requires careful consideration of several factors, including instructional materials, peer interactions, classroom arrangements, teaching strategies, and adequate infrastructure. Inclusive learning should be characterized by repetition and practice, contextualized learning, life skills integration, and the use of simple, accessible language to promote effective communication (Farah et al., 2022). Likewise, inclusive education requires the presence of special assistant teachers, who have specialized training and can identify and assess the abilities and needs of students with special needs (Irvan & Jauhari, 2018).

Disability in Indonesia presents a complex challenge, as individuals with disabilities often face significant barriers to living independently, securing employment, and accessing public facilities such as libraries, similar to the general population (Diana et al., 2020). Due to that, people need more physical and non-physical facilities. Children with disabilities are still faced with a lot of challenges in realizing their right to education and they are one of the most marginalized and excluded groups in education (Bouillet & Kudek-Mirošević, 2015). Currently, we find many job markets are employing children with disabilities. It is very petrified for children with disabilities to be able to live independently. So children with disabilities need to be equipped with knowledge.

According to Indonesia Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Disabilities, every child has the right to receive quality education across all types, pathways, and levels of education, both inclusively and through specialized support. Moreover, children have the right to equal opportunities to pursue roles as educators or education personnel across various educational settings. The Indonesian government has shown a strong commitment to disability rights (Ningrum, 2022). Based on this, it is clear that every child has the right to access education and knowledge.

Research on inclusion and schools for students with disabilities has revealed that student management in special needs education within Central Java Province remains insufficient. This is attributed to the lack of proper acceptance processes for children with special needs, the absence of comprehensive assessments, and the unavailability of a supportive learning curriculum. That study concluded that it is necessary to work together to improve the results of the evaluation of inclusive education and collaborate with therapists (Syaifudin & Widiastuti, 2015). Moyi found that people with special needs need information just as most learners have access to library resources (Moyi & Muya, 2020). User education programs should be comprehensive enough to equip users with potential skills when searching for sources of information. Therefore, all people with special needs should have access to information that

enables them to be active and equal contributors and participants in society (Moyi & Muya, 2020). Setiawan's research stated that despite their disabilities, children with special needs still have a strong desire to seek information to meet their needs. Their motivation to find information stems from a need to solve problems. Although they face limitations and often experience negative treatment from society, these challenges drive them to remain motivated to pursue information as both an escape and a means of personal growth (Setiawan et al., 2021).

The State Inclusive School 1 in Bengkulu, Indonesia, envisions empowering children with special needs to become independent, skilled, and individuals of faith and piety. Additionally, the school aims to produce graduates with special needs who possess strong character, practical skills, and self-reliance. The students with disabilities at this school belong to various groups, including those with intellectual impairments, learning disabilities, visual impairments, and physical disabilities. Given their diverse learning needs, it is essential to provide tailored support and focused attention to enhance their information literacy. This school has implemented literacy programs for children with special needs by holding fivteen-minutes reading activities where the library provides collections and facilities for them to support reading materials, and collaborates with teachers and libraries in using information sources.

Children with disabilities should also develop information literacy, though their approach may differ from that of their peers. They often require additional time and repeated practice to effectively grasp literacy materials (Jerome & Ainsworth, 2020). Hence, teachers and libraries must play an active role in fostering the literacy of special school children. Every child with a different disability group will also have a different literacy level. The literacy level of children at the State Inclusive School 1 in Bengkulu indicates a need for increased motivation to encourage students to utilize the library's resources. This lack of motivation has resulted in suboptimal engagement in information-seeking activities. Students with disabilities require special convenient access to library services as compared to the general student population (Phukubje & Ngoepe, 2017).

The current study aims to analyze the information literacy of children with disabilities at the State Inclusive School 1 in Bengkulu and to design an information literacy model tailored for children with special needs. This study distinguishes itself from previous research by specifically focusing on children with disabilities across elementary, junior, and senior high school levels. The goal is to develop an information literacy model designed for children with disabilities, addressing a gap in existing research, as current models primarily cater to general information literacy without adaptations for special needs. Consequently, this study seeks to provide parents, teachers, and librarians with a practical framework for implementing information literacy tailored to children with disabilities. This highlights the importance of developing a specialized information literacy model, with the ultimate objective of creating an adjusted model to effectively support these children.

2. METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to assess the information literacy of children with disabilities at the State Inclusive School 1 in Bengkulu and to design an adapted information literacy model for these students with special needs. The aim of this approach is to explore the symptoms and phenomena related to information literacy among them. The study's subjects consist of children with special needs attending the school, which includes 141

students across different educational levels: 65 elementary, 31 junior high, and 45 vocational students. The disabilities represented among the students include intellectual, physical, and speech impairments.

The informants for this research were selected based on specific criteria, which included children with disabilities, as well as teachers and library staff at the school. Data collection methods included interviews, observations, and documentation. To ensure the validity of the data, the study employed data triangulation, which involves cross-checking interview responses with information from multiple sources, enhancing the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

The data analysis process followed a systematic approach involving data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. Initially, the researcher observed students' behaviors during their interactions with information. Subsequently, the data were analyzed and categorized according to the specific disabilities of the students. Finally, the researcher identified the stages of information literacy based on the students' limitations and developed an information literacy model tailored to the needs of children with disabilities.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Information literacy among students refers to their capacity to identify and access information that aligns with their specific needs. Children with special needs, however, exhibit distinct approaches to information-seeking behavior. This study examines the 141 children with special needs enrolled at the State Inclusive School 1 in Bengkulu, which provides comprehensive education at the elementary, junior high, and vocational levels. The vocational high school curriculum includes specialized training in areas such as beauty, fashion, grooming, automotive technology, and computing. Information literacy in this context is assessed through specific indicators based on the IFLA information literacy framework by Jesus Lau, which includes Access, Evaluation, and Use (Lau, 2006).

a) Access of Information

Access of information is the ability to obtain information effectively and efficiently. Children with special needs approach information identification differently from their peers. Typically, children without disabilities have various options for accessing information sources and widely utilize these resources. In contrast, children with special needs often rely on engaging and accessible information sources and media to meet their needs. Teachers play a crucial role in this process by providing information in formats that help children recognize concrete objects around them, such as images of transportation, fruits, vegetables, and other everyday items.

Teachers play a crucial role in assisting children in identifying relevant information, as they are familiar with each student's individual needs. Recognizing that every child has unique information requirements, teachers adjust the resources accordingly. For instance, older students are generally more capable of reading simpler storybooks. In inclusive schools, students are typically grouped based on their disabilities, although these groups may occasionally be combined due to limited resources. In addition to classroom materials, teachers encourage students to explore information in the library, promoting independent learning within a nurturing environment.

When identifying students' information needs, teachers consider each students's abilities and interests. Typically, students visit the library under the guidance of their teachers, who

facilitate the experience by providing a variety of resources, such as storybooks, picture books, and educational props. These teaching aids are essential in libraries serving children with special needs, as their requirements often differ significantly. The library houses an extensive collection of props that are especially popular among elementary school students, who benefit from a combination of fiction reading and interactive engagement with these materials.

Teachers guide young students in the library to help them meet their information needs, and the role of librarians is essential in supporting children with disabilities. At the school, librarians assist by ensuring access to information that accommodates the needs of elementary-level students, particularly those who have yet to develop independent reading skills. Their support includes reading materials aloud and facilitating tailored learning experiences to enhance students'

Figure 1: Image learning media
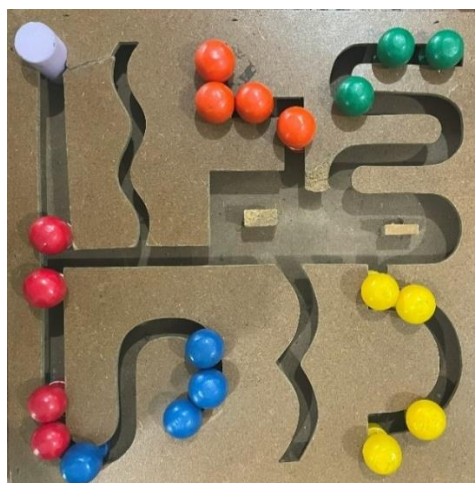
Figure 2. An educational game in the library

Teachers often use specialized learning media to support children with disabilities, particularly those in elementary school, as these tools facilitate easier learning. Teachers identify students' information needs based on their individual abilities, selecting books and resources suited to each child. While resources for children with special needs are available in the library, the Braille collection currently remains unused due to the absence of deaf students.

Children with disabilities heavily rely on teachers as their primary guides when seeking information. Again, teachers play a crucial role in understanding each child's unique educational needs and limitations, often more so than parents. They adapt learning methods by incorporating interactive books and educational games from the library to cater to these needs. The author's observations reveal that only a few children visit the library independently due to limited abilities; those who do often come to engage with interactive games.

Disability results from the interaction between individuals with health conditions, such as cerebral palsy, down syndrome, and depression, with personal and environmental factors including negative attitudes, inaccessibility to transportation and public buildings, and limited social support (WHO, 2016). The results of the study reveal that children with disabilities actively use information to fulfill their learning needs. Information services provided to these children should be equitable, ensuring no discrimination in access to learning materials. Children with special needs bring their own perspectives to learning and engaging with different subjects (Ningrum, 2022). Children with disabilities or different abilities is a concept used to describe individuals with different abilities, where these people are not like they can not do something, but they do it differently (Setiawan et al., 2021).

At the State Inclusive School 1 in Bengkulu, Indonesia, teachers played important roles in guiding children, particularly in accessing and identifying information within the library. Each child with special needs in the school exhibited a unique approach to seeking information and determining their specific needs. Notably, students heavily much depended on their teachers, especially within the context of classroom learning, to facilitate their information-seeking processes.. Teachers with special education have a role to play in building learning (Amalia & Kurniawati, 2021). The learning of children in schools with special needs differs for each type of particular need. Children in this particular school are placed in different classes from each other. They are grouped into classes for the deaf, mentally impaired, physically impaired and autistic. These children are set in rooms based on their limitations. They learn to read, write, and listen with help from co-teachers or homeroom teachers. Each teacher accompanies a class where one class usually consists of seven people, but due to the limitations of the teacher, there are times when children consist of more than seven people in one class. Children in this school are in the light category will learn differently from children with special needs in the heavy category. The simultaneous and interrelated development of reading, writing, speaking (expressive language), and listening (receptive language) was first applied to support students with disabilities (Erickson, 2017).

When starting access to information, children were very dependent on their teachers, whereas when learning in class, children follow all teacher instructions in carrying out learning. Teachers prepare learning materials in their classrooms based on children's learning needs. For the elementary grade, the teacher provides information about learning through image media. The use of visual learning media can improve students' intellectual activity (Kiriwenno et al., 2022). Visual learning media is considered an information medium that is suitable for elementary school because they are new to the objects around them. This is revealed by Mangowal, who said that children who follow learning and use media such as media games will usually be more enthusiastic (Mangowal, 2023). In addition, the role of librarians is also crucial in improving children's literacy activities, namely by providing picture books. Picture books can visualization literacy skills and train children to comprehend the story from multiple perspectives (Oktarina et al., 2020). Kindergarten and early elementary school-age children tend to prefer picture story books (Hafiar et al., 2017).

Meanwhile, the learning media provided were storybooks for junior high school and high school children. This is because children at the junior and senior levels can already read, but they are still given information according to their needs. For example, children who were deaf and mentally impaired should still be guided in reading. Children with intellectual disabilities were usually children with special needs where they are intellectually below average compared to general students. In this case, the learning provided by the teacher was more learning to self-development. These mentally impaired children obtain information from information sources provided by teachers. Because these children lack development, teachers should better prepare them for self-development to prepare for their future. It can be concluded that children in obtaining information and learning remain categorized by the type of limitation of the child.

Children with intellectual disabilities also used technology to help them learn and complete tasks related to their lesson assignments. In this inclusive school, children were usually not allowed to play using gadgets during learning. They usally have information technology class. In this class, they used computer devices. Technology has helped them to overcome or compensate for deficiencies and become more independent in school (Messmer, 2013). They often used Google search engine for electronic information. However, students in the vocational high school were more motivated to independently seek information. In contrast, elementary and junior high school students relied significantly on teacher assistance. This distinction suggests that while elementary and junior high school students still require guidance from teachers to use technology for information retrieval, high school students are capable of independently conducting searches.

b) Evaluation of Information

Evaluation of information is the stage where users evaluate information critically and competently. Evaluation activities can be carried out by assessing information and grouping information. In this study, the evaluation of information was primarily conducted through teachers. Observations revealed that teachers tailored the selection of information to meet the specific needs of children with disabilities. Information resources were categorized based on the type of disability or the individual needs of the child. Students in higher grades were typically provided with storybooks, as they had developed reading skills. Conversely, picture books and visual media were more commonly allocated to younger children with special needs in elementary grades, as many of them had not yet acquired reading proficiency. While teachers played a significant role in curating information, children also engaged with electronic resources as part of their information-seeking process.

The students said utilizing the internet, particularly Google, as a primary tool for information retrieval. High school students frequently employed this search engine to locate information relevant to their school tasks. Observations indicated that students often relied on Google to find answers to teacher-assigned questions. However, their approach to evaluating information was limited; they selected answers based solely on their alignment with the given questions. There was little evidence of students engaging in critical verification or validation of the information retrieved. Instead, they tended to directly use answers that matched the questions, assuming them to be accurate without further scrutiny.

Observations from the study revealed that students, particularly those with intellectual disabilities, primarily accessed the internet at home. Occasionally, they brought their mobile phones to school, particularly during the end of the semester. These students often used the internet to seek entertainment-related information, including content about movies,

celebrities, food, and other leisure activities. Teachers, however, played a significant role in providing information aimed at self-development, especially for students with intellectual disabilities. This teacher-sourced information was intended to help students enhance their skills and prepare for life after graduation.

The majority of children's information comes from teachers. Teachers will select information that is appropriate to the needs of children. The teacher's evaluation process is to choose books that are in accordance with children's learning. The selection of information is adjusted to the characteristics of children's limitations so that it will not be the same between one child and another. In electronic information, children with disabilities usually evaluate information simply by selecting whichever best suits the lesson alone. Children with intellectual disabilities include children who often use information using the internet. They are in the Vocational High School category. It can be concluded that children need evaluation assistance in choosing the correct information. When they evaluate information, they only choose which is the same, especially for information sourced from the internet. Children must also be equipped to evaluate information to find the correct information, especially from the internet.

c) Use of information

The use of information involves accurately and creatively applying information, along with responsible use and effective communication. The students used information to enhance their skills and abilities. Observations indicated that the students with special needs utilized information in various ways, often with guidance from teachers. Teachers especially focused on providing self-improvement information for children with intellectual disabilities, helping them develop both personal competencies and academic skills. The information these students receive is aimed at building their skills, which they will continue to apply beyond graduation.

Students utilized teacher-recommended books, including those from school curricula and library collections, as primary resources. Additionally, high school students frequently accessed the internet, particularly Google, to meet their informational needs. In many cases, parents encouraged children to use online platforms for information-seeking. Children with disabilities also engaged with information technology to access and share information. For instance, students with speech impairments often relied on WhatsApp for communication and information exchange, including interactions with peers who had hearing impairments. Observations indicated that while their verbal language might be imprecise, they effectively used sign language to facilitate clear communication over distances.

Students with intellectual disabilities also leveraged online platforms such as Google, Facebook, and Instagram, both for educational purposes and entertainment. These students commonly accessed the internet for school assignments, with usage observed across elementary, junior high, and vocational education levels. Beyond academic activities, students with special needs often explored the internet to follow celebrity news and engage with entertainment content. Digital literacy can be used to improve students' skills and achievement (Alsalem, 2016).

Accessing and using information is a crucial activity for children with disabilities at the school, with most of the information they engage with being provided by their teachers. The majority of the information they access comes from classroom instruction and the subject materials delivered by teachers. For instance, appropriate textbooks are available at the elementary, junior high, and vocational levels. In addition to academic content, teachers also

supply storybooks tailored to the students' reading abilities. These resources are particularly important for children with disabilities, including those with intellectual impairments, as they help facilitate learning and development.

Providing non-physical access, such as access to the library, is essential for children with special needs. There has been a widespread view that students with disabilities may face barriers to access to library space, implying that they do not benefit from these services and facilities (Ilako et al., 2020). The library is also a source of information used by children where elementary school children will come to the library to read and play. Where librarians read books that are desired by children. This is alike mentioned by Syafi'ie (2014) that communication support services are important to be provided to people with disabilities, which aims to make the disabled better understand the information available. For example, reading certain texts to the visually impaired, using notes or writing when communicating with speech-impaired people, providing adaptive hearing aids in cinemas and so on.

Design of Information Literacy Application Model for Students with Special Needs

Children with disabilities will differ in having information literacy in finding information. Any limitations of children will be different. In this study, researchers tried to design a model for the application of information literacy for children with disabilities. The stages that children with disabilities can take to have information literacy skills are as follows:

Figure 3. Information literacy design model

1) Identifying Information

Identifying information is the stage when children with disabilities want to meet information needs. In children with disabilities, information identification can be done by looking at what children need, such as doing tasks, to add to the child's information or for entertainment. Children with disabilities will be different from normal children, so to identify them, you can:

a. Ask the teachers

b. Go to the library to ask librarians and teachers

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2) Search for information

Children with disabilities are not the same as other normal children. People with disabilities obtain information sourced from teachers. Strategies for finding information that female students can do are:

a. Receive information sourced from teachers, such as learning materials and books

b. Use library collections in the library to meet needs

c. Use the internet to search for information, such as Google, YouTube, and others

d. Visit places of information sources such as museums and observe information in museums

3) Evaluate information

Information evaluation activities are the stage of selecting the most appropriate information that children can use. For children with disabilities, evaluating information can be done by asking teachers and librarians to find out which information is authentic. Children with disabilities need help from teachers, especially in finding online information because children usually like to copy and paste information without checking the truth first.

4) Use of Information

This is the stage where children use information in various activities. Children with disabilities use information by performing tasks such as copying content for assignments or transcribing information from various sources, including books, the internet, and other resources like museums.

The information literacy model was designed on the characteristics of children's limitations in the State Inclusive School 1 Bengkulu.

a. Children with intellectual disabilities

Children in this category have below-average intelligence. When seeking information, these children are able to perform certain stages of the process, such as,

- Identifying information: Identifying information can be done with guidance from the teacher. The role of the teacher here is to choose the appropriate information and reading materials because this child has below-average abilities.

- Search for information: These children can search the library for information, through the internet and books.

- Evaluation: At this stage, it needs to be guided because children with intellectual disabilities tend not to be able to choose the right information, especially on the internet.

- Uses: Children with intellectual disabilities can read, and copy information that has been read.

b. Physical disabilities

Disabled are children with physical disabilities or physical disabilities. Based on the findings, these children have fairly good knowledge but have physical limitations. These children can apply information retrieval models with

- Identification: At this stage, the child can search for what he wants, this child usually likes to read and go to sources of information to increase his knowledge

- Seeking information: Children seek information from a variety of sources
- Evaluation: These children evaluate information by selecting information from teachers and librarians or places that provide information
- Uses: These children take notes, repeat and reread notes.

c. *Speech-impaired*

Speech-impaired children are unable to speak and use sign language. These children can apply information retrieval models by

- Identification: Children search for needed information by asking friends and using sign language. Identification can be made by asking the teacher and using the video call application to share or look for information from friends.
- Seeking Information: Children seek information from various sources, including friends, teachers, and libraries.
- Evaluation: Children choose informatics sourced from teachers, librarians and friends
- Using: Use the information to work on a task.

Based on the discussion above, children's information literacy is significantly influenced by their dependence on teachers, as teachers guide them daily. The role of teachers is essential in developing information literacy, as they direct and motivate students in their information-seeking efforts. Similarly, the role of librarians is pivotal in nurturing information literacy among children, ensuring that students are equipped for independence when they graduate from the State Inclusive School 1 in Bengkulu, Indonesia.

4. CONCLUSION

Students at this school demonstrate varying levels of information literacy based on their unique needs. A key finding is the significant reliance of children on teachers to access primary sources of information. The role of teachers in the classroom is crucial, given the daily guidance they provide in facilitating learning. Additionally, parents must take an active role in supporting their children's information needs and fostering literacy development. Children with special needs often turn to teachers for assistance in information retrieval. Furthermore, both teachers and librarians play essential roles in guiding students through the process of finding and using information. Librarians contribute by assisting students in locating appropriate books, reading materials, and engaging in educational games, ensuring that learning remains engaging. The approach to information literacy varies across educational levels—elementary, junior high, and vocational high schools—reflecting the developmental stages of the students. Moreover, the information literacy needs of children with disabilities are influenced by the specific nature of their limitations. A comprehensive literacy model for children with disabilities should encompass the identification, searching, evaluation, and application or use of information, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills to obtain accurate and relevant information.

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