

Educational Management Strategies in Improving Student Discipline at Special Needs Schools in Batam City

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze educational management strategies in improving student discipline at special needs schools in Batam City. Student discipline is an important aspect of the educational process, particularly in special education settings where students possess diverse cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral characteristics. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of how educational management strategies are implemented in improving discipline among students with special needs. The study was conducted in several special needs schools in Batam City involving school principals, teachers, administrative staff, parents, and students as research participants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that educational management strategies significantly contribute to improving student discipline through structured school routines, positive reinforcement, adaptive classroom management, collaborative leadership, and parental involvement. School principals played important roles in coordinating disciplinary programs and creating supportive school cultures, while teachers implemented individualized behavioral approaches adjusted to students' special needs. The study also found that positive reinforcement and emotional guidance were more effective than punitive approaches in developing discipline among students with disabilities. In addition, supportive learning environments and collaboration between schools and families strengthened students' behavioral adaptation and compliance with school regulations. However, several challenges were identified, including limited infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, and inconsistent parental involvement. Therefore, strengthening educational management systems, improving teacher competencies, and enhancing collaboration among educational stakeholders are essential for creating sustainable disciplinary cultures in special needs schools.

Keywords : Educational Management; Student Discipline; Special Needs Schools; Inclusive Education; Behavioral Management; Batam City.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a fundamental instrument in shaping human resources capable of contributing to social and national development. In the context of special education, schools are not only expected to provide academic services but also to develop students' behavioral, emotional, and social competencies. One of the most important aspects in the educational

process of students with special needs is discipline. Student discipline reflects obedience to school rules, responsibility, self-control, and the ability to adapt to the social environment. In special needs schools, discipline development becomes more complex because students possess diverse physical, intellectual, emotional, and behavioral characteristics that require adaptive educational management strategies.

In recent years, the issue of educational management in special needs schools has received increasing attention globally and nationally. The concept of inclusive and adaptive education encourages schools to create learning environments that are supportive, structured, and student-centered. According to Fauzi, Tobroni, and Widodo (2025), inclusive education management requires schools to establish flexible educational systems that can accommodate the diverse needs of students with disabilities while maintaining effective learning discipline. Similarly, Mahmud, Djaafar, and Hamim (2025) explain that the implementation of child-friendly and inclusive education policies often faces operational challenges, particularly related to school management, teacher readiness, and behavioral supervision systems.

Discipline in special needs education cannot be understood merely as compliance with rules. Instead, it involves the cultivation of positive habits, emotional regulation, social interaction skills, and structured routines appropriate to each student's condition. Students with autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments, or emotional disorders often require individualized approaches in managing behavior and discipline. Therefore, educational management strategies in special needs schools must integrate pedagogical, psychological, and managerial dimensions simultaneously.

The importance of effective management strategies is increasingly relevant in urban areas experiencing rapid educational development, including Batam. As one of Indonesia's rapidly growing industrial and multicultural cities, Batam faces increasing demands for equitable and quality education services, including education for children with special needs. The growing number of special needs students requires schools to improve institutional management, teacher competence, learning supervision, and student discipline systems. However, in practice, many special schools still encounter challenges such as limited human resources, lack of specialized training, inadequate facilities, and difficulties in implementing consistent disciplinary policies.

Research conducted by Famella, Hanafi, and Anita (2025) found that inclusive and special schools frequently struggle with teacher preparedness and limited support systems in managing students' behavioral discipline. The absence of adequate professional development programs often affects the effectiveness of classroom management and student supervision. In addition, schools without sufficient collaboration among teachers, parents, and administrators tend to experience greater obstacles in creating sustainable disciplinary cultures.

Another challenge emerges from the diversity of student characteristics in special needs schools. Classroom management strategies that are effective in regular schools may not necessarily be suitable for students with disabilities. Herlinawati and Rindaningsih (2023) emphasize that managing students with special needs requires adaptive communication approaches, emotional guidance, and preventive strategies against bullying and social exclusion. Teachers must be capable of balancing firmness in discipline with empathy and individualized support.

Moreover, discipline development in special schools is strongly influenced by the quality of educational management. Effective school management includes planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating programs designed to support student behavior development. Curriculum management, teacher coordination, infrastructure management, and parental involvement are essential components in building positive discipline cultures in schools. Kriswanto, Suyatno, and Sukirman (2024) explain that inclusive curriculum management contributes significantly to improving student adaptation and classroom participation because it allows schools to adjust learning processes according to students' specific needs.

Infrastructure and learning environments also play a critical role in shaping discipline among students with special needs. Accessible facilities, structured classrooms, sensory-friendly spaces, and safe school environments help students feel more comfortable and emotionally stable during learning activities. According to Santi et al. (2025), disability-friendly infrastructure management positively influences students' engagement, participation, and behavioral consistency in school activities.

In addition to institutional factors, collaboration between schools and parents is another determining element in improving student discipline. Students with special needs often require continuity between discipline patterns implemented at school and at home. Without effective communication between teachers and parents, behavioral interventions carried out at school may become inconsistent and less effective. Therefore, educational management strategies should not only focus on internal school systems but also involve external stakeholders in supporting student development comprehensively.

The urgency of strengthening discipline management in special needs schools is also supported by the broader educational transformation agenda in Indonesia. Current educational policies increasingly emphasize character education, inclusivity, and holistic student development. However, the implementation gap between policy and practice remains significant, especially in schools serving students with disabilities. Many institutions still focus more on academic achievement than on behavioral and social development, despite discipline being a foundational aspect of student independence and lifelong adaptation.

Several previous studies have examined inclusive education management, classroom strategies, and curriculum adaptation for students with special needs. Nevertheless, studies specifically discussing educational management strategies in improving student discipline at special needs schools, particularly in the context of Batam City, remain limited. Most existing studies focus on learning outcomes, inclusive policies, or teacher competencies, while discipline management has not been comprehensively explored as a strategic component of school administration. Therefore, this study is important to fill the existing research gap by analyzing how educational management strategies are implemented in improving student discipline in special needs schools in Batam City.

This research is expected to contribute theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the study can enrich the literature on educational management and special education, particularly regarding discipline development strategies. Practically, the findings may provide recommendations for school principals, teachers, policymakers, and educational stakeholders in developing more adaptive and effective disciplinary management systems for students with special needs. Ultimately, effective educational management strategies are expected to create supportive learning environments that encourage students with special needs to become more disciplined, independent, and socially adaptive individuals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Educational Management

Educational management refers to a systematic process of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating educational activities to achieve institutional goals effectively and efficiently. In the school context, educational management involves the coordination of human resources, curriculum, infrastructure, and student services to create an optimal learning environment. According to Bush (2022), educational management emphasizes leadership and organizational effectiveness in improving the quality of education. In special needs schools, educational management must be adaptive and responsive to the diverse characteristics of students with disabilities. Effective management enables schools to develop structured learning systems, behavioral supervision, and student support services that contribute to discipline improvement. Educational management in special education also requires collaborative approaches among principals, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. The success of school programs depends not only on administrative systems but also on leadership capacity in creating inclusive and supportive educational cultures. Therefore, educational management becomes an important foundation in establishing discipline systems suitable for students with special needs.

Student Discipline

Student discipline is defined as students' compliance with school regulations, learning procedures, and behavioral norms established within educational institutions. Discipline reflects self-control, responsibility, punctuality, and respect for rules and social interactions. According to Tu'u (2021), discipline is not merely obedience enforced through punishment, but a process of developing awareness and responsibility in students' behavior. In special needs schools, discipline development requires individualized approaches because students possess different cognitive, emotional, and behavioral conditions. Students with autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, hearing impairments, or intellectual disabilities may demonstrate unique behavioral patterns that influence their ability to follow rules consistently. Therefore, schools need flexible and supportive disciplinary systems that prioritize guidance, habituation, and emotional support rather than purely punitive approaches. Student discipline also contributes significantly to the effectiveness of learning activities. Disciplined students tend to show better classroom participation, social interaction, and academic engagement. Consequently, discipline becomes one of the essential indicators in evaluating the success of educational management in special schools.

Special Needs Schools

Special needs schools are educational institutions specifically designed to provide educational services for students with physical, intellectual, emotional, sensory, or developmental disabilities. These schools aim to help students develop academic competencies, social skills, independence, and adaptive behavior according to their individual capacities. According to Hallahan, Kauffman, and Pullen (2023), special education emphasizes individualized instruction and supportive learning environments tailored to students' unique needs. Special needs schools require specialized management systems, professional educators, adaptive curricula, and accessible facilities to ensure effective learning processes. Compared to regular schools, classroom management in special schools tends to be more complex because teachers must simultaneously address academic, behavioral, emotional, and communication challenges. As a result, educational management strategies in special schools must integrate psychological understanding, behavioral intervention, and inclusive educational practices. In Indonesia, the development of special needs education continues to improve through inclusive education policies and increased government attention toward educational equality. However, many schools still face challenges related to infrastructure limitations, teacher competence, and behavioral management systems, including student discipline.

Educational Management Strategies in Improving Student Discipline

Educational management strategies are planned actions and approaches implemented by school management to achieve educational objectives, including the improvement of student

discipline. These strategies may include classroom management, rule enforcement, supervision systems, reward and punishment mechanisms, parental involvement, teacher coordination, counseling services, and character education programs. According to Robbins and Coulter (2022), management strategies are effective when they involve clear planning, strong leadership, continuous supervision, and organizational collaboration. In special needs schools, management strategies must also consider students' psychological conditions and individual learning needs. Discipline improvement cannot rely solely on rigid regulations but must incorporate positive reinforcement, communication, emotional guidance, and behavioral adaptation. Several studies indicate that supportive school environments, consistent supervision, and strong collaboration between teachers and parents contribute positively to discipline development among students with special needs. Adaptive educational management strategies help students build structured habits, improve emotional control, and increase social responsibility within school environments. Therefore, educational management strategies become crucial in shaping positive disciplinary cultures in special needs schools. Through effective management systems, schools can create safe, structured, and inclusive learning environments that support students' behavioral and personal development comprehensively.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze educational management strategies in improving student discipline at special needs schools in Batam City. The qualitative approach was chosen because it enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of management practices, disciplinary processes, and interactions among school stakeholders within natural educational settings. The research was conducted in several special needs schools in Batam City selected purposively based on their implementation of student disciplinary programs and inclusive educational management practices. The participants consisted of school principals, teachers, administrative staff, counselors, parents, and students who were considered directly involved in the implementation of disciplinary management. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies to obtain comprehensive information regarding school management systems, disciplinary policies, behavioral supervision, classroom management, and collaboration between schools and parents. The interview process focused on exploring management strategies, challenges, and institutional efforts in fostering student discipline among children with diverse disabilities. Observations were conducted to examine students' behavioral patterns, classroom interactions, school routines, and the implementation of disciplinary regulations in daily activities. Meanwhile, documentation analysis included school regulations, student discipline records, curriculum documents, school activity reports, and institutional policies related to special

education management. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, this study applied triangulation techniques by comparing information obtained from different participants, methods, and data sources. Ethical considerations were also maintained throughout the research process by obtaining participants' consent, ensuring confidentiality, and respecting the rights of students with special needs involved in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Educational Management Strategies Implemented in Special Needs Schools in Batam City

The findings of this study show that special needs schools in Batam City have implemented various educational management strategies to improve student discipline. These strategies were designed not only to enforce school regulations but also to help students with special needs develop behavioral awareness, responsibility, emotional control, and social adaptation skills. Since students in special schools possess different physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral characteristics, schools applied adaptive and student-centered disciplinary management systems.

Based on interviews with school principals and teachers, educational management in special needs schools focused on creating structured learning environments through planning, organizing, implementation, and continuous supervision. School principals played an important role in coordinating teachers, counseling staff, and parents to ensure consistency in disciplinary practices. Most schools implemented daily routines such as morning assemblies, attendance monitoring, classroom schedules, and behavioral supervision programs. These activities aimed to establish structured habits among students and help them understand the importance of discipline in school life.

In practice, the schools emphasized positive and persuasive approaches rather than authoritarian disciplinary systems. Teachers explained that students with autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, hearing impairments, or intellectual disabilities often require repetitive guidance and emotional support in following school rules. Therefore, educational management strategies prioritized guidance, habituation, communication, and behavioral reinforcement.

The implementation of educational management strategies found in this study can be summarized in the following table:

No	Educational Management Strategy	Implementation in Schools	Impact on Student Discipline
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1	Structured Routines	Daily	Morning assembly, attendance checks, learning schedules	Improved punctuality and routine compliance
2	Positive Reinforcement		Verbal praise, rewards, motivational activities	Increased student motivation and rule compliance
3	Classroom Management		Visual schedules, classroom rules, sensory-friendly spaces	Better concentration and classroom behavior
4	Teacher Coordination		Regular meetings and student evaluations	Consistent disciplinary approaches
5	Parent Collaboration		Parent consultations and communication programs	Stronger discipline consistency at home and school
6	Counseling and Emotional Guidance		Behavioral mentoring and emotional support	Improved emotional control and social adaptation

The table above indicates that disciplinary improvement was not achieved through punishment-oriented systems alone, but rather through comprehensive educational management involving collaboration among various stakeholders. The schools attempted to create safe, structured, and supportive environments suitable for students with special needs.

The Role of School Leadership in Improving Student Discipline

The results indicate that school leadership significantly influenced the success of disciplinary management in special needs schools. Principals were responsible for developing school regulations, supervising teachers, coordinating student services, and ensuring the implementation of adaptive disciplinary systems. In several schools, principals actively conducted evaluations regarding student behavior and discussed disciplinary challenges during teacher coordination meetings.

The leadership style observed in this study tended to be collaborative and participatory. Principals encouraged teachers to share experiences and discuss effective approaches in handling students with behavioral difficulties. This collaborative culture contributed positively to consistency in implementing school regulations. Teachers reported feeling more supported in managing students because school leaders provided flexibility in applying disciplinary strategies according to students' individual conditions.

Furthermore, school principals attempted to build positive school cultures emphasizing respect, empathy, responsibility, and independence. Instead of emphasizing fear-based discipline, schools encouraged students to understand the consequences of their actions gradually through guidance and repeated habituation. This approach was considered more effective for students with special needs because many of them require emotional adaptation and continuous assistance in understanding social norms.

The findings also reveal that effective leadership helped schools maintain organizational stability and improve communication among educational stakeholders. Schools with strong

managerial leadership demonstrated more organized disciplinary systems and better student behavioral outcomes compared to schools with weaker coordination systems.

Teacher Strategies in Managing Student Discipline

Teachers were identified as the most influential actors in implementing disciplinary management within classrooms. Since teachers interact directly with students during daily learning activities, they become central figures in shaping students' behavioral habits and emotional development.

The study found that teachers used individualized disciplinary approaches depending on students' characteristics and disabilities. For example, students with autism spectrum disorder often responded better to visual instructions and structured routines, while students with ADHD required more active supervision and shorter instructional sessions. Teachers adjusted communication methods, classroom instructions, and behavioral interventions according to these conditions.

One of the most commonly used strategies was positive reinforcement. Teachers frequently gave verbal appreciation, rewards, stickers, or opportunities to participate in preferred activities when students successfully followed school rules or completed classroom tasks responsibly. This method motivated students to repeat positive behaviors consistently.

The following table presents several teacher strategies identified during classroom observations:

No	Teacher Strategy	Description	Observed Result
1	Positive Reinforcement	Providing praise and rewards	Increased student motivation
2	Visual Learning Aids	Using pictures and visual schedules	Better understanding of rules
3	Emotional Guidance	Calming and mentoring students emotionally	Reduced aggressive behavior
4	Individualized Instruction	Adjusting communication methods	Improved student responsiveness
5	Consistent Supervision	Monitoring students continuously	Increased behavioral consistency

Classroom observations also showed that punitive approaches were rarely used excessively. Teachers explained that strict punishment often triggered emotional instability among students with special needs. Consequently, schools preferred persuasive and preventive disciplinary methods focused on behavioral adaptation rather than fear or coercion.

These findings demonstrate that teacher competence in classroom management and behavioral guidance is crucial in improving discipline among students with special needs. Therefore, professional training related to special education and behavioral management remains essential for improving educational quality in special schools.

Classroom Environment and Infrastructure Support

Another important finding of this study is the influence of classroom environments and school infrastructure on student discipline. Special needs schools in Batam City attempted to create learning environments that were safe, comfortable, and supportive for students' emotional and behavioral development.

Several schools used visual classroom rules, structured seating arrangements, sensory-friendly learning spaces, and calming corners to reduce distractions and emotional disturbances. Teachers stated that students became more focused and cooperative when learning environments were organized systematically.

The study found that students with sensory sensitivities or emotional disorders often experienced difficulties concentrating in noisy or crowded classrooms. Therefore, environmental management became an important part of disciplinary management strategies. Schools that possessed more adaptive facilities demonstrated more stable classroom behavior and higher student participation during learning activities.

However, some schools still faced infrastructure limitations, including insufficient counseling rooms, limited learning media, and inadequate classroom space. These limitations occasionally affected the implementation of individualized behavioral supervision programs. Despite these challenges, schools attempted to maximize available resources to maintain supportive learning environments.

Parent Collaboration in Supporting Student Discipline

The findings indicate that parental involvement significantly contributed to the success of disciplinary management in special needs schools. Schools regularly communicated with parents regarding students' behavioral progress, emotional conditions, and disciplinary challenges. Several schools implemented parenting programs and consultation sessions to help parents understand appropriate disciplinary approaches for children with special needs. Teachers emphasized that discipline development would be more effective if students received consistent behavioral guidance both at school and at home.

Parents who actively collaborated with schools generally showed better outcomes in their children's behavioral adaptation and emotional stability. In contrast, inconsistent parental involvement sometimes reduced the effectiveness of disciplinary interventions implemented at school. The study also found that some parents experienced difficulties in managing children's

behavior at home due to occupational demands, emotional stress, or limited understanding of special education approaches. Consequently, schools attempted to strengthen communication systems and provide educational support for families. These findings demonstrate that discipline improvement in special needs schools requires collective responsibility involving schools, teachers, parents, and the broader social environment. Without strong collaboration, disciplinary programs may become inconsistent and less sustainable.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that educational management strategies have an important role in improving student discipline in special needs schools in Batam City. Effective disciplinary management requires adaptive leadership, individualized teaching strategies, supportive learning environments, and collaborative relationships between schools and parents.

The results align with educational management theory emphasizing that successful school management depends on planning, coordination, supervision, and evaluation processes. In special education contexts, management strategies must also integrate psychological understanding and emotional support because students with special needs possess diverse behavioral and developmental characteristics.

The study further demonstrates that positive reinforcement approaches are more effective than punitive disciplinary systems for students with special needs. Behavioral guidance, emotional mentoring, and repetitive habituation help students gradually understand social norms and develop self-control abilities.

Moreover, the findings support previous studies stating that school culture and classroom environment significantly influence student behavior. Schools that provide structured routines, safe environments, and emotionally supportive interactions tend to achieve better disciplinary outcomes.

Despite positive findings, the study also highlights several challenges, including limited infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, and inconsistent parental involvement. These challenges indicate the need for greater institutional support, professional development programs, and stronger collaboration between educational stakeholders.

Overall, educational management strategies implemented in special needs schools in Batam City have contributed positively to improving student discipline. However, sustainable improvement requires continuous evaluation, increased teacher competence, improved educational facilities, and stronger partnerships among schools, families, and communities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that educational management strategies implemented in special needs schools in Batam City play an important role in improving student discipline. The success of disciplinary development is influenced by the integration of adaptive school management, collaborative leadership, individualized teaching approaches, supportive classroom environments, and active parental involvement. Discipline in special needs schools is not merely interpreted as compliance with school rules, but also as a process of developing responsibility, emotional control, social adaptation, and positive behavioral habits among students with diverse disabilities.

The study found that school principals contributed significantly through the implementation of structured management systems, teacher coordination, supervision programs, and the establishment of positive school cultures. Teachers also played a central role in applying individualized disciplinary strategies adjusted to students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral conditions. Positive reinforcement, emotional guidance, visual learning aids, and structured routines were identified as effective approaches in encouraging students to follow school regulations consistently.

Furthermore, supportive learning environments and adaptive infrastructure positively influenced students' behavioral stability and classroom participation. Schools that provided structured and sensory-friendly environments demonstrated more effective disciplinary implementation. In addition, collaboration between schools and parents strengthened consistency in behavioral guidance both at school and at home, contributing to better student discipline outcomes.

However, this study also identified several challenges faced by special needs schools in Batam City, including limited infrastructure, insufficient professional training for teachers, limited counseling services, and inconsistent parental involvement. These obstacles affected the effectiveness of disciplinary management and highlighted the need for stronger institutional support and educational resources.

Overall, the findings indicate that improving student discipline in special needs schools requires comprehensive and adaptive educational management strategies involving all educational stakeholders. Therefore, schools are encouraged to strengthen collaborative leadership, improve teacher competence in behavioral management, enhance educational facilities, and develop sustainable partnerships with parents and communities. Through effective educational management, special needs schools can create inclusive, supportive, and disciplined learning environments that help students develop independence, responsibility, and positive social behavior.

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