
The Teacher's Role in Developing Communication and Social-Emotional Skills of Children with *Autism Spectrum Disorder*

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the role of teachers in addressing the communication and social skills of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEP). This type of research in this article uses a literature study with a qualitative approach—data collection techniques using literature analysis. Source triangulation is done by searching for data from various sources that are still related. The results of the study show that: 1) Children with ASD experience problems in communication and social-emotional aspects, 2) Children with ASD have very varied conditions, so the approach will be different 3) Communication and social-emotional strategies can be adapted to the school environment according to the needs of children with ASD, 4) Regular (inclusive) schools, the role of the teacher is to provide assistance and focused treatment of the individual autistic child, 5) For mild autistic children, he can still interact and communicate with normal children, while for this severe type, he cannot interact socially and communicate even though he is with his friends..., 6) The application of the IEP (Individualized Educational Program) can accommodate individual barriers because it is an individual program based on the special needs of children in learning so that it can optimize children's potential both in the learning process as well as education as a whole, 7) An autistic people tend to be alone and show preoccupation with their world and minimal eye contact so they don't seem to focus on the surrounding social environment.

Keywords: *autism spectrum disorder, communication skills, individualized education program, social-emotional*

Abstrak



Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui peran guru dalam menangani kemampuan komunikasi dan sosial anak dengan Autism Spectrum Disorder dan penerapan IEP (Individualized Education Program). Jenis penelitian dalam artikel ini menggunakan studi literatur dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data menggunakan studi kepustakaan. Triangulasi sumber dilakukan dengan cara mencari data dari beragam sumber yang masih berkaitan satu sama lain. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: 1) Anak dengan ASD mengalami gangguan pada aspek komunikasi dan sosial-emosional, 2) Anak dengan ASD memiliki kondisi yang sangat bervariasi, sehingga pendekatannya pun akan berbeda 3) Strategi komunikasi dan sosial-emosional dapat disesuaikan dengan lingkungan sekolah sesuai dengan kebutuhan anak dengan ASD, 4) Pada sekolah reguler (inklusi), peran guru adalah memberikan pendampingan dan penanganan yang berfokus pada individu anak autis, 5) Untuk anak autis tipe ringan, masih dapat berinteraksi dan berkomunikasi dengan anak normal, Sedangkan untuk tipe berat, mereka tidak dapat berinteraksi sosial dan berkomunikasi meskipun dengan teman-temannya, 6) Penerapan IEP (Individualized Educational Program) dapat mengakomodir hambatan individu karena merupakan program individual yang didasarkan pada kebutuhan khusus anak dalam belajar sehingga dapat mengoptimalkan potensi anak baik dalam proses pembelajaran maupun pendidikan secara keseluruhan, 7) Anak autis cenderung menyendiri dan menunjukkan keasyikan pada dunianya serta kontak mata yang minim sehingga terlihat tidak fokus pada lingkungan sosial di sekitarnya.

Kata Kunci: gangguan spektrum autisme, keterampilan komunikasi, program pendidikan individual, sosial-emosional

1. Introduction

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental *disorder* that can cause significant social, communication, and behavioral difficulties, which is a developmental disorder caused by differences in the brain. Children with ASD will communicate, interact, and learn differently.¹ ASD is a group of developmental disorders characterized by widespread deficits in socialization and communication and unusual behaviors or interests.² Different factors have been identified as causes, including environmental, biological, and genetic factors, and some other causes are unknown. Scientists suggest that the cause of ASD is *multifactorial*. ASD symptoms usually start before a child is three years old and can last throughout the child's life, although over time, symptoms may improve. Some children show symptoms of ASD within the first 12 months of life, and some do not show symptoms until 24 months of age or later. Some children progress developmentally until around 18 to 24 months, then stop and lose their developmental progress. Presenting behaviors such as aggression, non-compliance, self-injury, tantrums, and

¹ Anonym, "Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/Ncbddd/Autism/Facts.Html>.

² Joyce S Nicholas et al., "Prevalence and Characteristics of Children with Autism-Spectrum Disorders," *Annals of Epidemiology* 18, no. 2 (2008): 130–136, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annepidem.2007.10.013>.

stereotypy are common in school-aged children with ASD.³ The message from the literature is that children with Autism are at high risk of exhibiting problematic behaviors. Thus, early childhood children with ASD are at high risk of developing behavioral disorders.⁴

The condition of children with ASD varies greatly; some have good communication skills, while others tend to communicate non-verbally. Some children can perform daily activities independently or with much help. In addition to the tendency to have impaired communication and social interaction, some may have different ways of learning, moving, or interests. Students with ASD often fail to develop meaningful social relationships with teachers and classmates. That is due to difficulties with communication (in some cases, no spoken language at all) and a tendency to engage in behavioral disorders, ranging from tantrums to self-injury, aggression, and property destruction.⁵

The Government of Indonesia has issued Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 70 of 2009 on Inclusive Education (Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia) and Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 66 of 2010 as well as a copy of Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 34 of 2010. These regulations govern the implementation of inclusive schools from the Early Childhood Education level to the tertiary level. Because it has become necessary, Inclusive Education has now been implemented at various levels in many educational institutions. Inclusive education is increasingly needed today due to the increasing number of children with special needs who need education services. As a form of special attention, the Directorate General of Early Childhood Education and Dikmas responds to this by establishing inclusive institutional services in various regions by preparing the proper system so that inclusive Early Childhood Education services are more extensive and of high quality. Therefore, a guidebook for implementing integrated early childhood education was issued in 2012. The Fourth point of the Guidelines for the Implementation of Integrated Early Childhood Education states, "Children with physical and mental developmental abnormalities have the right to receive Early Childhood Education services, both in the form of special and inclusive education." The seventh principle section states that "Every Early Childhood Education Unit

³ Wendy Machalicek et al., "A Review of Interventions to Reduce Challenging Behavior in School Settings for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders," *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders* 1, no. 3 (2007): 229–46, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2006.10.005>.

⁴ Robert H Horner et al., "Problem Behavior Interventions for Young Children with Autism: A Research Synthesis," *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 32, no. 5 (2002): 423–446, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1020593922901>.

⁵ Lynn Koegel et al., "Interventions for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Inclusive School Settings," *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice* 19, no. 3 (2012): 401–12, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cbpra.2010.11.003>.

must try to accommodate children with special needs to the extent of its capacity while still guaranteeing the rights of the child concerned to associate with fellow learners reasonably and be protected from discriminatory treatment, both from other students, educators, and other adults."⁶

Communication is one of the most fundamental skills that develop in early childhood, where children begin to understand and process the world around them and express their thoughts, ideas, and feelings. When speech and language skills are inhibited or constrained, it can adversely impact the child's social and emotional aspects. Children who experience an inability to make themselves understood or process their emotions may develop isolation, *temper tantrums*, or behavioral problems. If this continues as they age, it can lead to social and emotional challenges. For example, a child who stutters may experience poor self-confidence, withdraw, or limit their interactions with their peers for fear of ridicule. It is likely that the child knows what they want to say but cannot translate thoughts into proper sentences, leading to frustration and anger. Previous studies on children with ASD have shown that social and emotional development in preschool children is very influential for school success and future life success.⁷ The development of communication skills is closely related to language skills, which ultimately affect the ability to interact with the surrounding environment as an aspect of a child's social-emotional development.

Similar research conducted by Plavnick and Hume showed that learners with Autism experience an inability to imitate and observe the school environment.⁸ Delays or limitations in understanding (receptive) and expressing (expressive) in communication also affect academic performance, the ability to talk and understand sentence structure, and even vocabulary. Learners with Autism may have difficulty communicating because they have repetitive behaviors that can affect school activities. In a landmark 29-year study, it was found that children with delays in receptive language skills (the ability to understand someone else's commands or speech and then process the information) are at greater risk for social, emotional, and behavioral problems as adults.⁹

⁶ Asep Supena et al., *Guidelines for Implementing Inclusive Early Childhood Education*, ed. Muhammad Hasbi and Kurniati Restuningsih (Jakarta: Directorate of Early Childhood Education, Directorate General of Early Childhood Education and Community Education, Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018).

⁷ Dariush Djamnezhad et al., "Social and Emotional Learning in Preschool Settings: A Systematic Map of Systematic Reviews," *Frontiers in Education*, 2021, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/educ.2021.691670>.

⁸ Joshua B Plavnick and Kara A Hume, "Observational Learning by Individuals with Autism: A Review of Teaching Strategies," *Autism*: 18, no. 4 (2014): 458-466, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361312474373>.

⁹ Ingrid Schoon et al., "Children's Language Ability and Psychosocial Development: A 29-Year Follow-up Study," *Pediatrics* 126, no. 1 (2010): e73-e80, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2009-3282>.

Samson et al. 2012 conducted a study that showed that children with ASD process auditory (auditory) or linguistic (verbal) information more slowly than their peers.¹⁰ In addition, the study showed that the simultaneous processing of verbal and visual stimuli may be complicated. However, children with ASD can also improve perceptual functions when engaged in visual processing. The brain's working system shows superior performance on visual tasks, so many children with ASD show better visual abilities or are called "*visual learners*" compared to children without ASD. That will underlie the communication skills that generally occur verbally. Thus, there is a need to consider interaction and communication strategies so that visual assistance will make it easier for children with ASD to understand something, such as the communication area.

The school environment can also adapt and adjust to accommodate children with ASD in communication, which will ultimately help children socialize with peers and teachers as educators. The early childhood education environment is one of the platforms for developing aspects of early childhood development.

The importance of this is supported by several studies, which state that improving social skills will cause *repetitive behaviors*.¹¹ Reduced *repetitive behaviors* will increase learning activities and social achievement. Social skills in children with ASD will directly affect interactions with peers.¹² Ultimately, improved relationships with peers will affect emotional aspects.

Autistic children are often seen as challenging to develop, but in reality, they have the opportunity to develop just like normal children. Children with special needs also get the right to be educated, *mainstream* in public schools, of course, with a certain level of condition. For this reason, it is necessary to educate people on changing the view of ASD in obtaining education. To be able to develop optimally according to their potential, children with Autism in any condition deserve the opportunity to get good treatment. Currently, some schools provide inclusion services to children with Autism who are combined with normal children.

¹⁰ Fabienne Samson et al., "Enhanced Visual Functioning in Autism: An ALE Meta-Analysis," *Human Brain Mapping* 33, no. 7 (2012): 1553-1581, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/hbm.21307>.

¹¹ Brian A Boyd et al., "Effects of a Family-Implemented Treatment on the Repetitive Behaviors of Children with Autism," *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 41, no. 10 (2011): 1330-41, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-010-1156-y>.

¹² Katrina Ostmeier and Angela Scarpa, "Examining School-Based Social Skills Program Needs and Barriers for Students with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders Using Participatory Action Research," *Psychology in the Schools* 49, no. 10 (2012): 932-41, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21646>.

According to Sartika and Amri, a person has the social skills to interact and behave according to particular circumstances.¹³ In this case, the essential ability for everyone is the ability to communicate. Although the assumption of many people say that communication is a straightforward thing to do, some humans are not perfect at communicating, and one of them is Autism. In addition to communication problems, autistic children experience barriers to social interaction, language, communication, and academic ability.

For children with *Autism Spectrum Disorder* who are in public schools, adjusting to the social environment in the school is certainly not easy. Some autistic children can interact or socialize with their peers, both regularly and with other autistic children. Children with ASD often fail to develop meaningful social relationships with teachers and classmates due to difficulties in communication (in some cases, no spoken language skills at all) and a tendency for challenging behavior, ranging from tantrums to self-injury and aggression. Educators conduct interventions designed to reduce challenging behaviors, teach communication skills, and improve social relationships to address intervention implementation issues that may exist in the school environment.¹⁴

An inclusive education institution is a regular school that runs an education service system for children with special needs. Inclusive education services rely heavily on the cooperation of teachers and parents who support each other to achieve success. The preparation of an IEP (*Individualized Educational Program*) is tailored to the child's condition, whether intellectual, physical, social-emotional, or other conditions.¹⁵

Based on these descriptions, this scientific article will discuss a summary of development for students (learners) with ASD conditions in the school environment, especially in early childhood, focusing on development efforts that can be applied in the school environment by teachers or educators with the application of the curriculum as an essential component for inclusion that is specific to inclusive schools that are educational services for children with special needs with the application of IEP (*Individualized Educational Program*) according to the condition of the child's special needs, for example ASD children.

¹³ Rini Sartika and Amsal Amri, "Teachers' Efforts in Building Interpersonal Communication with Autistic Students During the Teaching and Learning Process at SMPLB YPAC Banda Aceh," *Scientific Journal of FISIP Unsyiah Students* 2, no. 3 (2017).

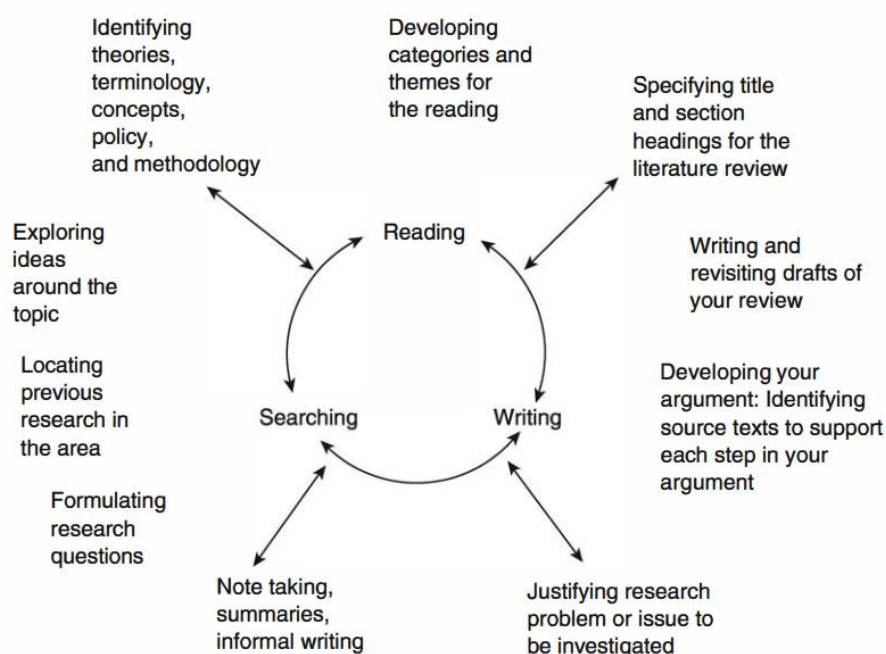
¹⁴ Koegel et al., "Interventions for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Inclusive School Settings."

¹⁵ Rahmasari Dwimarta, "IEP (Individualized Educational Program) Design for Children with Special Needs in Inclusive Education," in *PROSIDING SEMINAR NATIONAL EDUCATION "Hacking Successful Scientific Publications in the Field of Education in Reputable Journals,"* vol. 1 (Surakarta: Sebelas Maret University Surakarta and ISPI Central Java Region, 2015), 230-36.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative research methodology that refers to Sukmadinata's theory of educational research methods.¹⁶ To describe and analyze the conditions of children with ASD developed through the role of teachers in an inclusive school environment with the implementation of an IEP (*Individualized Educational Program*). This type of research uses the *literature review* method.

According to Snyder, a literature review is a very supportive way of synthesizing research findings to show evidence at a meta-level. It helps uncover areas that need more research. It is essential to creating a theoretical framework and building a conceptual model.¹⁷ The stages in this literature review refer to what Ridley said: Literature search, reading, and writing feed into each other constantly.¹⁸



Picture 1. Illustration of Ridley's Literature Review Process ¹⁹

The sources used are journals that are relevant to the topics discussed. The literature review in this literature research was conducted by tracing various books, journal articles, and various other publications related to the research topic. This method is systematic and explicit and can be reused to

¹⁶ Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata, *Educational Research Methods* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2017).

¹⁷ Hannah Snyder, "Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines," *Journal of Business Research* 104 (2019): 333–39, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>.

¹⁸ Diana Ridley, *The Literature Review: A Step-by-Step Guide for Students*, ed. Katie Metzler, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2012).

¹⁹ Ridley.

identify, evaluate, and synthesize the results of previous research by researchers and practitioners on children with ASD and their development.²⁰

3. Result and Discussion

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Based on the references, it can be concluded that communication and social-emotional skills in children with Autism are not the same as other children of the same age. So adjustments in the form of strategies are needed, especially in the school environment. Communication is an aspect that is related to aspects of development and education, including socialization, behavior, and academic achievement. Communication deficits in children with ASD vary from monotonous speech, limited to specific preferred topics, to no verbal communication. It is a challenge for the school to address the ASD child's communication impairment as it increases the risk of behavioral problems and disengagement in school.²¹ Therefore, it is crucial to include communication aspects as *goals* in the program developed for children with ASD who experience impairments in the area of communication.

One of the most efficient ways to improve communication is to provide more opportunities for ASD children to communicate. Providing and organizing more communication opportunities can improve communication meaningfully. It is essential to do so when the child is motivated to communicate. For example, students may be highly motivated to make verbal requests when they want an item that cannot be obtained without help from the teacher (e.g., a snack, a toy on a high shelf, or access to a computer). Asking, "Do you want to use the blue or green crayon?" This method allows verbal communication, and students' communication efforts can be reinforced naturally. The following section will discuss some strategies that can be adapted to the school environment.

The role of teachers in early childhood with ASD

In the development of social interaction and communication of autistic children in inclusive education institutions, the role of the teacher is to provide assistance and treatment that focuses on the individual autistic child. From the assessment, it will be seen what the needs and handling are, whether they need a companion teacher or not, and then how the inclusion program can be implemented.

There are mild and severe types of autistic children. Mild autistic children can still interact and communicate with normal children, while

²⁰ Titik Rahayu et al., "Teknik Menulis Review Literatur Dalam Sebuah Artikel Ilmiah," 2019, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31227/osf.io/z6m2y>.

²¹ Koegel et al., "Interventions for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Inclusive School Settings."

severe types cannot socially interact and communicate even when they are with their friends. Because Autism is a socialization and communication disorder, autistic children tend to prefer to be alone without interacting even among their friends. Usually, children with Autism in school will require a special assistant teacher. Classroom teachers and special mentor teachers work together to handle children with special needs because these children need adequate treatment in the inclusion program, especially in social and emotional interaction and involvement in teaching and learning activities.²²

Schools ready to accept children with special needs have a service and handling plan in their institutions. Usually, these schools are inclusive. The implementation of IEP (*Individualized Educational Program*) for students with special needs or *Autism Spectrum Disorder* in inclusive schools is essential because it is tailored to the needs and conditions of the child. The IEP (*Individualized Educational Program*) can accommodate different individual needs because the learning program is based on the child's special needs in learning so that it can optimally optimize the child's potential in the learning process.

Barriers to Social Interaction of Autistic Children at School

Based on Rahayu's theoretical review, the factor that hinders social interaction for autistic children is their habit of being alone and showing a preoccupation with their world, so they pay less attention to their surroundings.²³ Only things that interest him can make the child pay attention to his surroundings; for example, he sees a friend he likes, and there are activities according to his hobbies. The autistic child's eye contact is also unfocused, and he often shows no interest in the games played by other friends. Thus, it can be concluded that autistic children often communicate in a one-way form, namely between the researcher/questioner and the child himself.

Communication and Socio-Emotional Strategies for Children with ASD

Children with symptoms of ASD who are in therapy will have more intensive communication interventions; two research-based interventions that may be appropriate are PECS or *Picture Exchange Communications System* and *Pivotal Response Training* (PRT). Both techniques are based on Applied Behavior Analysis and emphasize the importance of the child's motivation in communication.

²² Muhammad Iqbal Ansari, Barsihanor Barsihanor, and Nirmala Nirmala, "Peran Guru Pendamping Khusus Dalam Mengembangkan Emosional Anak Autisme Di Kelas 1 A SDIT Al-Firdaus Banjarmasin," *Al-Madrasah* 6, no. 1 (2021): 21-39, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.35931/am.v6i1.418>.

²³ Rini Rahayu, "Peran Guru Dalam Mengembangkan Interaksi Sosial Anak Autis Di SD Al Firdaus" (Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, 2017).

PECS teaches children to communicate by providing pictures or symbol cards that depict the child's communicative intentions. For example, if a child wants a snack, then the child hands the picture of the snack to the teacher.²⁴ When instructing a child to use PECS, the teacher physically assists the child with the picture exchange and blocks the child from getting what is wanted first (e.g., reaching for the snack directly).

In the social-emotional area, some things done in inclusive classroom settings are *priming*, *self-management*, *script-fading*, *peer-mediated* interventions, and organizing social activities that involve the interests of students with ASD. *Priming* involves providing opportunities for students with ASD to practice social activities (e.g., practicing a particular game) before students are expected to participate in social settings. *Priming* is helpful for children's difficulties with transitions or changes in routine.²⁵ For example, if the class is going to play soccer at recess, then students with ASD can be taught in advance how to throw the ball, the rules of the game, and how to behave on the field. *Self-management* and initiation training involves children with ASD being taught to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate social behaviors and rewarding themselves when they engage in appropriate behaviors.²⁶ Children who are taught to use social initiation (e.g., turn-taking, asking questions, commenting) have been shown to have better long-term success than those who do not.²⁷ *Script-fading* or *social scripting* involves using written or pictorial scripts with cues to behave in certain social situations or interactions. *Social scripting* and *script fading* are effective interventions for teaching language skills to individuals with ASD. Scripts serve as prompts or cues to enclose specifically taught words or phrases. The length of the script varies based on the child's skill level. Some scripts may include pictures with the text.²⁸ *Peer-mediated* interventions rely on direct peer involvement during the intervention. For example, a peer can learn to ask a classmate with ASD to ask for a turn on the playground swings and help remind them when to take turns with verbal language.

²⁴ Koegel et al., "Interventions for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Inclusive School Settings."

²⁵ Robert Koegel, Lynn Koegel, and Lauren Brookman-Frazee, "Empirically Supported Pivotal Response Interventions for Children with Autism," in *Evidence-Based Psychotherapies for Children and Adolescents*, ed. A. E. Kazdin (New York: Guilford, 2003), 341–57.

²⁶ J K Harrower and G Dunlap, "Including Children with Autism in General Education Classrooms. A Review of Effective Strategies.," *Behavior Modification* 25, no. 5 (2001): 762–784, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/0145445501255006>.

²⁷ Koegel et al., "Interventions for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Inclusive School Settings."

²⁸ Jessica S. Akers et al., "A Synthesis of Script Fading Effects With Individuals With Autism Spectrum Disorder: A 20-Year Review," *Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 3, no. 1 (2016): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-015-0062-9>.

Many studies report positive outcomes for peer-mediated interventions, suggesting that these interventions may be particularly suitable for inclusion classrooms.²⁹

Various types of interventions that incorporate the strengths of children with autistic conditions can improve peer relationships. However, implementing these procedures depends on the school's ability. Therefore, training of teachers and supporting teachers is essential.³⁰

Autistic Children and Inclusive Regular Schools

Although, in essence, every child has the right to the same education, the condition of autistic children is a problem in terms of obtaining education. The availability of schools willing to accept and provide inclusive learning services is needed because it can fulfill the same learning rights for every child. Because normal children are mixed with children with special needs in inclusive schools, there will be differences in the way special needs children interact socially with normal children. They will socialize and engage in direct communication, both verbal and non-verbal, with normal children. Although there are obstacles in themselves, with the habit of establishing communication with normal children, autistic children can improve their communication skills.

Inclusive education is a service program that can build quality education that accepts diversity, respects differences, and improves the quality of these educational institutions. According to Santoso, as cited in Dwimarta³¹ Inclusive education was organized to provide education that reaches everyone without exception. The term *special education has been* changed to *special needs education*, which provides opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in whole class activities.

The implementation of the IEP (*Individualized Educational Program*) in inclusive schools is an effort made by teachers to develop autistic children in social interaction consisting of a School Program and an individual Class Program. The School Program is centered on conducting interventions in collaboration with the Therapy Clinic to carry out a series of therapies, one of which is Occupational Therapy, which helps children's motor strength, coordination, and ability to do activities that require fine muscle skills. While related to the Class Program, special assistant teachers for autistic children create a special program in the IEP, which is designed based on the needs of

²⁹ Koegel et al., "Interventions for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Inclusive School Settings."

³⁰ Lynn Kern Koegel, Anjileen K. Singh, and Robert L. Koegel, "Improving Motivation for Academics in Children with Autism," *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders* 40, no. 9 (2010): 1057–1066, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-010-0962-6>.

³¹ Dwimarta, "Rancangan IEP (Individualized Educational Program) Bagi Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus Pada Pendidikan Inklusif."

the autistic child. In designing the IEP program, the accompanying teacher consults with experts or related parties such as the school principal, the autistic child's therapist, the school psychologist, and other consultants or experts. Implementing this IEP must be continuous with the therapy program at the child therapy clinic in collaboration with the school. It is to maximize the handling of these autistic children so that they experience optimal progress. The role of the accompanying teacher also aims to assist and direct children so that they can take part in learning and mandatory activities at school, as stated in Widuri's research.³² and Rini Rahayu³³ To be right on purpose and improve children's social interaction skills, teachers should create programs that are on the characteristics or problems of autistic children and provide innovative internal and external school activities. Getting positive feedback on the progress of autistic children's processes in social interaction requires acceptance and support for handling from parents.

4. Conclusion

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder that can cause social, communication, and behavioral difficulties. Several factors have been identified as causes, including environmental, biological, and genetic, and no known causes exist. According to scientists, several *multifactorial* causes of ASD can ultimately lead to impaired child development.

A child with mild Autism can interact and communicate with normal children; however, with severe Autism, he/she is just among normal children but cannot interact socially and cannot communicate with his/her friends but is silent. Since Autism is a socialization and communication disorder, autistic children tend to prefer solitude rather than playing with their friends.

Schools ready to accept children with special needs have a service and treatment plan in their institutions. Usually, these schools are inclusive schools by implementing an IEP (*Individualized Education Program*), which involves the School Program, which is a connection with the Therapy Clinic, and the Class Program, which is a program prepared by inclusion teachers at school based on the individual conditions of the autistic child.

5. Recommendations

a. Suggestions for Schools:

- Schools should provide inclusion services for students with special needs to get optimal education, such as the curriculum design in the form of an IEP (*Individualized Education Program*) based on the

³² Ratna Wahyu Widuri, "Penanganan Kemampuan Interaksi Sosial Anak Autis," *Jurnal Pendidikan Khusus* 3, no. 3 (2013).

³³ Rahayu, "Peran Guru Dalam Mengembangkan Interaksi Sosial Anak Autis Di SD Al Firdaus."

assessment of the individual needs of children with special needs at school.

- The school prepares accompanying teachers who implement the IEP program.
 - Principals and teachers should have extensive knowledge about Autism and other child developmental barriers by continuing to conduct intensive and continuous studies on the development of the science of handling children with special needs.
- b. Suggestions for Special Assistance Teachers :
- Teachers of children with disabilities need to understand the appropriate form of service.
 - Assistance teachers for children with disabilities are expected to be able to compile detailed IEPs so that individual programs can be implemented appropriately.
- c. Suggestions for Therapists or Autism Professionals :
- Collaborate with the school by discussing providing information related to the condition of students and what strategies can mutually support the targets (goals) to be achieved, one of which is by holding discussions related to programs for Early Childhood with ASD conditions.
 - Communication and social-emotional skills are aspects of development in early childhood that can be jointly stimulated in both the therapeutic and school environment, so good cooperation between teachers and therapists is needed.
- d. Advice for Parents of Autistic Children :
- Parents should continue to provide consistent and continuous therapy for their children at the therapy clinic.
 - Parents should cooperate and communicate well with the school in undergoing inclusive education for their children.
 - Parents should be committed and consistent in carrying out activities suggested by therapists or teachers at school.

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