



DEVELOPMENT OF A FAMILY RESOURCED COMMUNICATION PROGRAM FOR THE VERBAL COMMUNICATION ABILITIES OF CHILDREN WITH THE AUTISTIC SPECTRUM

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ABSTRACT

This research was motivated by a lack of understanding of families in providing efforts to optimize communication skills for children with the autistic spectrum, as well as the attitude of parents who pamper their children too much. This research aims to develop a family-based communication program. The subjects in this research were families of children with the autistic spectrum and children with the initials R aged 15 years. The research method used in this research is a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. The results of the research state that there has been a change in R's family's attitude, and the family understands the appropriate form and method of communication for R. The family-based communication program that has been designed can be understood and applied easily by the family.

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1. INTRODUCTION

When humans carry out interactions with other humans, they certainly need communication, the role of communication is as a bridge to build social interactions. Social interaction becomes a link between individuals, groups, and between groups and individuals. Communication is used as a means to carry out social interaction, but not all individuals can carry out communication well. One of them is Children on the Autistic Spectrum.

Alloy et al (2005, p. 426) suggest that Autism has difficulty understanding and using language in communicating with other people. The communication difficulties of children with autism in using language involve two aspects, namely *receptive language* and *expressive language*.

Strock (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2006) suggests that autism is a pervasive developmental disorder. Autism is characterized by limitations in three areas, namely communication skills, social interaction, and repetition of behavior patterns. Autism and other pervasive developmental disorders are demonstrated by the following behavioral characteristics: limitations in social interactions, abnormalities in verbal and non-verbal communication, and behavioral stereotypes and restricted interests.

Qualitative disorders in communication in children on the autistic spectrum, based on DSM-V guidelines (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), show at least one of the characteristics, namely speech delays or not developing their speech abilities at all, being able to talk but not using their speech to communicate, often uttering words. meaningless words for strange and repetitive language, less varied ways of playing, less imaginative, less able to imitate well.

Based on several expert opinions above, it can be concluded that children with the autistic spectrum experience obstacles in carrying out communication, both verbal and nonverbal communication.

Communication is a very important aspect of development for children as a vehicle for expressing feelings, ideas and desires which are a necessity. According to Quill in (Gardner, Jappe, & Gardner, 2009) states that communication is a dynamic process in which there is a process of encoding from the sender of the message and decoding from the recipient of the message, there is an exchange of information, the conveying of feelings (involving emotions), there is a goal. -specific goals and conveying ideas. Communication involves two individuals playing mutual roles in conveying and receiving a message.

Valeria & Lau (2011) stated that children on the autistic spectrum are characterized by delays in communication which result in challenges in their lives.

Barriers to the development of communication in children greatly influence children's behavior. Communication development includes expressive and receptive language abilities as well as pre-speech abilities. Martikainen & Korpilahti (2011) revealed that receptive and expressive language skills greatly influence a child's behavior. A child must go through each stage of communication development according to his age. These barriers to communication development can be handled by providing treatment from people closest to the child in their environment such as parents, the development of children's communication and language skills can also be caused by parents' treatment of children, namely a lack of understanding of

the child's developmental conditions so that parents provide less stimulus and motivation during the child's growth and development process. Parents do not understand children's difficulties in communicating, so that when children experience obstacles in the development of communication, parents do not make optimal efforts to minimize the impact of these obstacles.

Barriers experienced by children on the autistic spectrum in this study were expressive communication barriers or verbal communication. The child's ability to make sounds and words cannot yet be used to communicate. Children's vocabulary is very limited. When a child wants something, the child can only use gestures such as pulling on the clothes of parents or other family members and screaming, the child is not yet able to make and maintain eye contact with other people. The problem of communication barriers for children on the autistic spectrum is in accordance with Camarata's (2014) statement that children on the autistic spectrum experience problems in language development, thereby limiting their participation and interaction with the environment.

Children's development in the early stages of life is greatly influenced by their immediate environment, namely the family. Urie Bronfenbrenner (in Santrock, 2007, p. 56) explains that "the family environment as part of the environmental microsystem will make a positive contribution to the growth and development of children." The Ecological Theory (1974) explains that direct interactions within the family will provide learning experiences to children so that they will influence the child's development. This theory focuses on the social context in which children grow and develop. At the beginning of their lives, children spend more time with their families, thus demanding more attention and responsibility from their families, especially their parents. Assistance from parents as mediators, motivators and supervisors of children in the learning process is an essential need that should receive attention.

Interactions that occur in the family environment are a learning process carried out by children to improve their development. Vygotsky (in Santrock, 2007, p. 50) views that "Knowledge is not generated from within the individual but is built through interaction with other people, knowledge is conditioned and collaborative."

Vygotsky emphasizes that children's social interactions with more skilled adults and peers are important in improving children's development. Vygotsky (in Santrock, 2007, p. 51) with socio-cultural cognitive theory describes "child development as something that is inseparable from social and cultural activities." Through the concepts of *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)* and *mediated learning*, Vygotsky studied child development. Alimin (2009) explains that *The Zone of Proximal Development* referred to by Vygotsky is as follows

"The distance between adult competence and the actual developmental position that a child has achieved. The learning process is the process of closing the distance between adult competence and the child's actual development, and if the distance between the two becomes closer, that means development has occurred. It is in this zone that the learning process actually occurs in a child, and development is seen as a result of learning. Meanwhile, mediated learning is interaction between children and adults that occurs in the zone of proximal development. Therefore, the

essence of the learning process according to this perspective is interaction and communication between children and adults. The success of children's learning will depend greatly on the intensity of interaction and communication."

The problem that occurs with parents (research subjects) in this research is that parents as the closest family environment for children with the autistic spectrum are still unable to carry out treatment for the development of children's expressive communication, the reason is that it is viewed from the dimensions of *family quality of life*. have not been fulfilled and *the family system is functioning* it hasn't been achieved yet. The gap between quality family life factors and the functioning system of parents means that children with the Autistic Spectrum have not received stimulation in aspects of their communication development, which has an impact on the child's current expressive communication abilities. If parents are not immediately helped to fulfill the dimensions of quality family life and achieve a functioning parental system, children with the Autistic Spectrum will not receive stimulation in aspects of their communication development. Thus, researchers wish to assist parents in fulfilling and achieving these dimensions so that parents can carry out handling of children's communication development and the needs of aspects of children's expressive communication development can be met.

Based on Vygotsky's *Ecological Social System* theory, it can be explained that the needs for aspects of expressive communication development in children with the Autistic Spectrum can be met if the gaps that occur in *Family Quality of Life (FQoL)* are re-appreciated and the family's ability to function in *Family Functioning (McMaster Model)* can be regained by parents.

Based on the explanation above, it can be seen that there are two things that must be highlighted, the first is that Children with the Autistic Spectrum experience obstacles in carrying out communication and the second is the lack of understanding of parents in dealing with communication with Children with the Autistic Spectrum. From these two things, it is assumed that parents need a program guide that can guide families to carry out their role in developing communication for children on the autistic spectrum.

2. METHOD

The aim of this research is to develop a Family Resource Communication Program for Children on the Autistic Spectrum. Based on the research objectives, this research uses a descriptive method with a qualitative approach. The use of descriptive methods with a qualitative approach in this research was based on the results of a research review by Peffers, et al., (2007) which stated that 9 of the 11 program development studies reviewed used a qualitative approach.

The method used in program development research is based on problem findings, namely that families are still unable to take action on the needs of verbal communication development aspects of children on the autistic spectrum. If viewed from the problem findings and trends in the use of research methods, the descriptive research method with a qualitative approach is considered by researchers as a scientific way to obtain data and can

answer research questions on the basis of achieving research objectives as a result of the research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The condition of R's communication objective capabilities will be explained in the table below.

Communication aspect	Sub aspect	The potential that children have	Barriers experienced by children	Children's needs
Expressive Language	Verbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Able to make sounds or noises -Able to pronounce words clearly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The sound produced is not for communication - Difficulty using words to communicate with other people 	-Development of children's communication skills
	Non Verbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Able to maintain eye contact with others - Pulling parents' clothes when they want something 	-Eye contact for no more than 5 seconds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Practice improves the ability to reply and maintain eye contact -Practice using image symbols as a medium for communication

The condition of the family's objective capabilities will be explained in the table below.

Aspect	Indicator	The potential that the family has	Obstacles experienced by families	Family needs
Relationships in the family	Child development history	Can explain the history of the	Lack of understanding about Children	Understanding about Children on

		child's development	on the Autistic Spectrum	the Autistic Spectrum
	Children's communication skills	Parents know what their child's communication skills are like now	Not yet understanding the stages and communication abilities of children according to developmental stages	Knowledge about the stages of children's communication development
	Forms of daily communication between parents and children	Try to stimulate children by inviting them to communicate	The form of communication implemented does not pay attention to the child's difficulties and needs	Practice forms of communication that suit the child's obstacles and needs
	Parents' attitude towards children	Attention Full of love	Parents spoil their children too much	Commitment between father and mother in raising children
	Family acceptance of children	Be aware and accept the child's condition		Understanding of positive acceptance of a child's condition
	Family interaction and communication with children	-Active and positive interactions within the family -Mother, father and other	Lack of understanding about quality interactions within the family	Understanding of positive interactions that can be developed in a family environment

		family members always build communication in making decisions regarding child care		
Institutional Support	Support for children	Education services for children by sending them to special schools	Parental involvement is still low regarding children's education services	Increase parental involvement in children's education services
	Support for family	-	The school does not facilitate families in providing communication program services to children at home	Developing parents' abilities in providing communication program services to children

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Analysis of the Communication Abilities of Children on the Autistic Spectrum

Based on data from the assessment of the development of children's verbal communication skills, children's verbal abilities mean that children are not yet able to use words to communicate with other people. Meanwhile, children's non-verbal communication skills are that children are not yet able to reply and maintain eye contact with other people for more than 5 seconds and children can only use the gesture of pulling their parent's hand when they want something.

This research shows that children have eye contact and use gestures when interacting with other people in accordance with DSM V, namely the characteristics of children are not able to interact with other people, not able to make eye contact with other people.

4.2 Analysis of the Objective Conditions of Families of Children with the Autistic Spectrum

Families should have an understanding of the meaning of family quality, especially in families of children on the autistic spectrum. A good understanding of family welfare will have a positive impact on all family members so that they support each other and understand each other's needs

The attitude of the parents, especially the father, is authoritarian because parents do not want their children to socialize with other children because they are worried that their children will be treated badly because their children have different characteristics from other children.

Based on these aspects, data was obtained on the results of the family's objective abilities related to communication program services for Children with the Autistic Spectrum. In the dimension of relationships within the family, the potential possessed by the family is, Being able to explain the history of their child's development , Parents knowing what their child's communication skills are now , Trying to stimulate the child by inviting them to communicate , Attentive , Full of affection , Aware and accepting of the child's condition , Interaction who are active and positive in the family , mother, father and other family members always build communication in making decisions in child care. Meanwhile, the obstacles experienced are, lack of understanding about children on the autistic spectrum, not yet understanding the child's stages and communication skills according to developmental stages, the form of communication carried out does not pay attention to the child's difficulties and needs , parents pampering the child too much , lack of understanding about quality interactions in family . In the dimension of institutional support, the potential that families have is educational services for children by sending them to special schools, while the obstacles experienced are, parental involvement is still low regarding children's educational services, the school does not facilitate families in providing communication program services to children at home.

Research conducted by Brown et, al. in 2006 (in Noli, 2013) stated that 29% of the group of autistic children felt difficulties or felt there were few opportunities to carry out activities together. This condition explains that the relationships within families with autistic children are not well established, which has an impact on the family's understanding, attitudes and acceptance of the child's presence.

The results of the analysis of the family's objective conditions illustrate the family's lack of understanding regarding Children with the Autistic Spectrum, the family does not yet know the child's most important needs and how to help the child overcome his obstacles. This data is then used as a guideline in preparing family resource communication programs.

4.3. Analysis of the Formulation of a Family-Resourced Communication Program for the Communication Skills of Children on the Autistic Spectrum

Suherman and Sudrajat (in Hertianna, 2013, p. 11) state that a program is an activity plan that is prepared by considering factors related to its implementation.

The program design for families who have children on the autistic spectrum with verbal communication barriers is prepared based on an analysis of the results of the objective conditions of the child and parents/family. Collecting data on objective conditions of children and families through observation and interviews. The data from this assessment is analyzed

so that a child profile and family profile emerges which includes abilities, obstacles and needs related to program services for families and programs for children.

Based on the results of the analysis, a program for parents and families was formulated including: a) Parents' understanding of children on the autistic spectrum. Parents' understanding of children with the autistic spectrum is still lacking, so parents need broader knowledge. The program plan given to families regarding the material on Children with the Autistic Spectrum is explained via power point slides. b) Developing positive attitudes and acceptance towards children The family's attitude and acceptance of the child is sufficient to help the family in overcoming the child's obstacles related to the child's condition. However, the family's attitude still pampers their children too much. Changing positive attitudes towards children is the target of a program that will be designed for both parents and families. c) Develop family skills in implementing family-based communication programs. The limited knowledge that families have regarding the condition of autistic children means that families do not have the ability to handle children. Regarding educational services for children, parental involvement is still low where parents need knowledge and skills in assisting children through program implementation.

Meanwhile, the program plan given to Children on the Autistic Spectrum is to train and maintain eye contact skills, because children are still unable to make and maintain eye contact with other people for more than 5 seconds. So here the program is designed for eye contact using the ABA method and training using image symbols as a medium for communication using the PECS method.

The program design is then validated by experts and input, suggestions and criticism are provided. Revisions to the program include material quality, objective/usability quality, and technical quality/readability.

4.4. Analysis of the Implementation of a Family-Resourced Communication Program for the Communication Skills of Children on the Autistic Spectrum

Research conducted by Bohan (2014) suggests that treatment programs for therapy for autistic children really help parents/families in communicating with autistic children, therefore parents really need to have treatment guidelines and try to master and understand them so they can carried out at home with family.

The program in this research is a family-based communication program which is used as a guide by the family. The implementation of the program is carried out through training divided into 3 sessions, modeling, handover, and independent implementation by parents.

The first session was held in 3 meetings. The first session began with the researcher providing material to parents about the program. Furthermore, in this first session, the researcher implemented the program directly with the child, attended by the parents, this process is called modeling.

The second session, held 3 meetings. In this second session, parents carry out a program for their children with the help of researchers as a transfer process. In the process, researchers directed parents to follow the procedures listed in the program guide.

The third session involves parents implementing the program independently for their children by following applicable guidelines and procedures.

Next, researchers collected data for analysis using performance tests and interviews. This activity is related to the program that has been implemented and what changes have occurred to the family after carrying out the program. The following are changes in parents including: a) Parents' understanding of children on the autistic spectrum, along with the obstacles they experience. b) Fostering a positive attitude from parents and extended family regarding appropriate attitudes and care for children. c) Develop parents' skills in implementing the program to children according to the steps in the program guide. d) Can make a commitment with parents to be consistent in implementing the program at home.

Of the various benefits that parents obtain after implementing the program, there are still shortcomings in terms of implementation. Parents are still not able to consistently carry out intensive interactions with children regarding verbal communication activities. Children are often left to carry out their own activities so that the intensity of interaction with parents or other people is still very limited. Children's hyperactive behavior and difficulty focusing becomes a challenge for parents when implementing the program.

It is hoped that families, especially parents of children, can implement the program consistently with their children at home and invite other family members to participate in implementing the program, involving children in various situations to communicate.

5. CONCLUSION

Children's current communication skills in terms of verbal communication skills are being able to make sounds or voices, being able to pronounce words clearly. Meanwhile, the obstacles experienced are the sounds produced which are not a function of communication, difficulty using words to communicate with other people. Children's nonverbal communication skills are being able to maintain eye contact with other people, pulling on their parents' clothes when they want something. The subject's nonverbal communication barrier is eye contact for no more than 5 seconds.

The condition of the subject's family can be seen in aspects of the family's understanding of Children with the Autistic Spectrum. The daily form of communication between parents and children is not appropriate, making children less interested in interacting and communicating with the surrounding environment. There is a difference in attitude and initiative between Mother and Father regarding child rearing patterns where the mother is very enthusiastic about involving the child in interacting with the surrounding environment but the father forbids it because he is afraid that the child will be treated less well by the surrounding environment. It is not in line with the cooperation between the school and the people in order to provide learning services at home. Parents are not equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide services to children at home in developing their communication skills.

The design of the communication program for families who have children with autistic spectrum is prepared based on data on the objective conditions of the child and family. Data on the child's objective condition related to communication barriers and needs. Meanwhile, objective family condition data is compiled based on aspects of Family Quality of Life which adopt two of the nine aspects. Includes family relationships and institutional support. Based

on the results of the analysis of the needs of children and families, a program is then designed. The program design is divided into two programs for families and programs for children. The program design is then validated by experts.

The program designed can be understood by families (parents) so that they can implement the program for their children. The procedure carried out was through modeling techniques to the researcher then handing over to the family with the guidance of the researcher, then the family was given the opportunity to carry out the program independently. Parents have the confidence and ability to carry out programs for children, especially eye contact training and image media for communication.

6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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